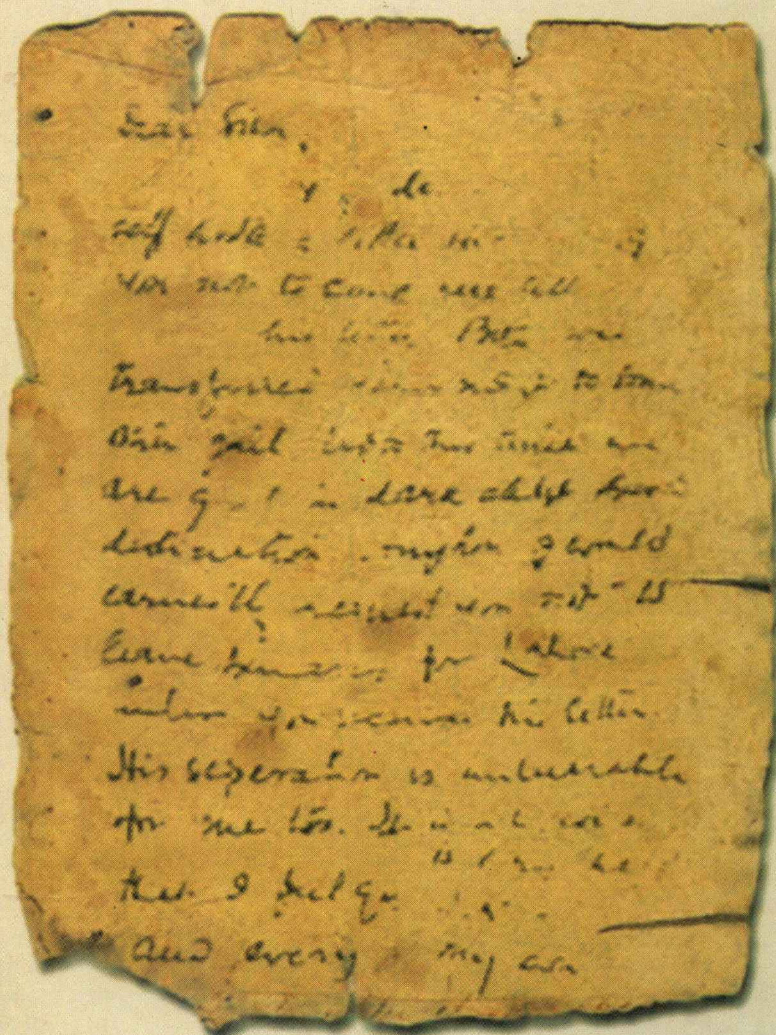
BHAGAT SINGH

Select Speeches & Writings



Edited by

D. N. GUPTA

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Popular Social Science

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Foreword by

BIPAN CHANDRA



National Book Trust, India

Note

This collection of Bhagat Singh's writings is divided into three parts: Part A: Speeches and Writings; Part B: Letters; and Part C: Appendices. The appendices contain those writings which have a direct bearing on the ideas and philosophy of Bhagat Singh but have not been authored by him, except for "Manifesto of the HRA" and "Constitution of the HRA"; they were, however, read and approved by him, as representing his party's views. These writings have not been arranged in a strictly chronological order. However, an attempt has been made to arrange them thematically as far as possible.

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Foreword

Bhagat Singh was a great patriot and revolutionary. But he was also a giant of an intellectual. He fully grasped the role of ideas and ideologies, especially those aimed at changing the society. For example, he said in a memorable statement before the High Court, "The sword of revolution is sharpened at the whetstone of thought". From his boyhood he immersed himself in books. He made Dwarka Das Library, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai, virtually his home. His comrades have pointed out how his kurta pockets were always filled with books. This passion for reading he carried into the jails, where he spent nearly last two years of his young life—he died before he was 24. This is borne out by his jail diary where he has recorded notes from the large number of books he read in jail.

The statement he made at his trials, the letters he wrote to the press, friends and relatives are witnesses of the quality of his mind and the wide understanding of society and social and political movements.

He eventually became a Marxist. But he did not adopt a readymade ideology. He grappled with issues, both personal and social and political, and came to Marxism the hard way. I believe that he was, consequently, capable of finding the Indian road to socialism, following in the footsteps of Lenin, Marx and Gramsci. This is borne out by the vast distances he travelled by the time he was 23. Starting out when very young as a believer in anarchic violence, he soon shed this belief and gradually, but rapidly, moved to socialism and Marxism. He was, therefore, as the following pages reveal, a revolutionary and a Marxist in

making; he was not so much what he became but what he was capable of being. He had a great promise, perhaps the greatest of all his contemporaries, when his life was cruelly cut short.

Bhagat Singh made several statements before courts which have become historic. In them he, and his co-signatory Batukeshwar Dutt, cogently described what he meant by Revolution to which he and his comrades were committed. Above all, he declared, Revolution meant the overturning of the old order based on exploitation of man by man. Revolution, he declared, was to be made by peasants, workers and youth. He and the revolutionaries gave us the abiding slogan: "Inquilab Zindabad" or "Long Live Revolution".

From all accounts Bhagat Singh wrote four books in jail. Unfortunately, the four books, smuggled out of jail, have been lost. Luckily, the pamphlet "Why I am An Athiest", written a few weeks before his martyrdom, was smuggled out to his father, who published it in June 1931 in *The People*, a weekly established by Laja Lajpat Rai and edited by Lala Feroze Chand. This pamphlet has been included in the present volume.

The National Book Trust, India, is proud to present this selection of Bhagat Singh's speeches, writings and letters to the people of India on the special occasion of his 100th birth anniversary as also to mark the 75th year of his martyrdom. This selection is being published in all Indian langauges.

BIPAN CHANDRA
Chairman
National Book Trust, India

Introduction

That Bhagat Singh was a great nationalist who sacrificed his life for the independence of the country is well known. But that he was, and saw himself as, a social revolutionary and a Marxist – and that too at a very young age (he was hanged when he was only 23) – and that he was developing as a major intellectual and thinker is not as widely known.

A number of factors contributed to the shaping of Bhagat Singh's socio-political thought. First of all, Gandhi's decision to suddenly suspend the Non-Cooperation Movement on the ground of the violent incident that look place at Chauri Chaura in 1922 disappointed many a youth of India. Most of the future revolutionaries, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Surya Sen, Jatin Das, Chandra Sehkar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Singh, Shiv Verma, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Jaidev Kapur and a host of others had actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhi's slogan 'Swaraj in one year' had enthused them with the spirit of nationalism. Their high hopes that Gandhi's first all-India movement had raised, however, got temporarily frustrated. They now started thinking of new ways through which they could achieve independence for India. The alternatives that the post Gandhian movement offered to them did not appeal. Neither the 'No-Changers' constructive programmes nor the 'Swarajists' politics to enter the Legislative Councils and to wreck the Constitution from within had much of an attraction for them. At the same time their burning desire to free the country from British imperialist stranglehold and to create a new social order continued to dominate their

thought-process. In this search for new methods of struggle, they were drawn to the idea of violent means that the earlier generation of the revolutionaries had adopted. Bhagat Singh was also, in particular, inspired by the revolutionaries of the Ghadar Movement. He was also immensely influenced by the Ghadarites' attempt to separate religion from politics and their international outlook. He was particularly inspired by the courage, self-sacrificing spirit and patriotism of Kartar Singh Sarabha, who had been sentenced to death at the tender age of 20 years. He adopted Sarabha as his role model and carried his photograph in his pocket.

The Russian Revolution (October 1917), undoubtedly, exercised great ideological influence on Bhagat Singh and his comrades. If the workers and peasants of a relatively backward country of Europe could successfully organize a revolution, then why could not the people of the colonial countries overthrow the imperialist stranglehold and bring about the desired social change. Bhagat Singh got fascinated by the new state. He undertook a serious study of revolutionary movements. Fortunately, literature on Soviet Union and the revolutionary movements in Italy, Ireland and Russia and the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, were easily available in Lahore at the Dwarakadas Library, founded by Lajpat Rai. Bhagat Singh was the largest user of the Library from an early age. He devoured any writing on revolutions and also persuaded his comrades to do so. This study left Bhagat Singh and his comrades to look upon Socialist Russia as an ideal. That was the reason why the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the public overground wing of the revolutionaries, celebrated 'Friends of Russia Week' in August 1928. During their trial the Lahore conspiracy case prisoners also celebrated the 'Lenin Day' in January 1930 in the court and sent their greetings to Moscow. Similarly, on the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, they sent their greetings to the people

of the Soviet Union. The Russian Revolution and Marxism had a major role to play in the transformation of the ideas of the revolutionaries, particularly in their thinking on the role of the masses and the forms of struggle. With the passage of time, however, they developed radical socialist ideas and belief in mass action, rather than in individual heroic or terrorist acts, became their creed.

Starting in his teens as a believer in individual heroic action, Bhagat Singh had gradually emerged, especially after 1927, as an organizer of a mass movement of peasants, workers, radical youth and intellectuals. This he made clear in a statement in 1931. "Let me announce with all the strength at my command that I am not a terrorist and I never was except perhaps in the beginning of my revolutionary career, and I am convinced that we cannot gain anything through these methods." But he was quick to add: "I do not mean to say that *mere bomb throwing is not only useless but sometimes harmful*," (Emphasis added). Bhagat Singh and his comrades wanted to build a new social order based on Marxist/Socialist principles.

Bhagat Singh's family background and his upbringing also played an important role in shaping his life and ideas. Bhagat Singh was born in a patriotic family on 27 September 1907 in the village Khatkar Kalan, tehsil Banga, district Jalandhar, though his father, Sardar Kishan Singh, had shifted to Layallpur (now Faisabad in Pakistan) sometimes before his birth. His family stood for patriotism, reform and freedom of the country. At the time of his birth both his father, Kishan Singh, and uncle, Swaran Singh were in jail. Another uncle of his, Ajit Singh, the famous revolutionary nationalist leader, had already been sent into exile outside India because of his nationalist activities among the peasantry. From his early childhood Bhagat Singh not only developed patriotic feelings but also got an opportunity to come into contact with the revolutionary nationalist leaders who were

frequent visitors to his house. When in 1919 the Jallianwala Bagh massacre occurred which left 379 innocent people dead and innumerable others injured, Bhagat Singh was studying at D.A.V. School, Lahore. The hurt and humiliation that India suffered left an ever-lasting impression on young Bhagat Singh. He was only twelve years of age. He went to Jallianwala Bagh to collect a handful of the soil, blessed with the blood of the innocents, and kept it as a memento all his life. It was at the call of Gandhiji to leave government and government aided and recognized educational institutions that Bhagat Singh left D.A.V. school and joined the National School started by Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand. It was here that Bhagat Singh developed close contacts with Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev and Yashpal. All of them actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement. However, a small incident in 1923 forced him to leave his home. Keeping in view the wish of Bhagat Singh's grandmother, his father, Kishan Singh, arranged his marriage. Bhagat Singh objected to the arrangement and left his home. He left a letter for his father in which he wrote:

> My life has already been committed to a noble cause – the cause of the freedom of India. For that reason comforts and worldly desires have no attraction in my life.
>
> You must be remembering that.... when I was quite young, Bapuji (grandfather) had declared that I was being pledged for the service of the country. I am, therefore, honouring the pledge of that time. I hope you will excuse me.

The period of his revolutionary activities began from the time he left Lahore and went to Kanpur. Bhagat Singh got busy in building his contacts with other like-minded revolutionaries. At Kanpur he stayed with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi and came to know Batukeshwar Dutt, Bejoy Kumar Sinha and Chandra Shekhar Azad. He also joined the Hindustan Revolutionary

Association which Sachindranath Sanyal had formed at the end of 1923. He also worked with the Pratap Press and translated Sachindranath Sanyal's *Bandi Jeevan* into Punjabi.

In early 1925 Bhagat Singh returned home on the assurance of his father that he would not be married against his wishes. By the time he came back to Punjab, the Akali Movement had acquired an important dimension. He actively participated in the movement, but soon he had to leave Punjab in order to avoid arrest. He went to Delhi and worked with the Hindi daily *Vir Arjun*. At the end of 1925 he again went to Kanpur where he participated in attempts to free the Kakori prisoners from jail but without any success.

The arrest of the Kakori Conspiracy Leaders had almost wiped out the entire revolutionary leadership and given a serious setback to the movement. This, among many others, was an important reason for Bhagat Singh to realize the need for organizing an open, legal mass organization. As a result of this, in 1926 was organized the 'Naujawan Bharat Sabha' and in 1928 he and Sukhdev formed Lahore Students' Union which was to serve as an auxiliary to the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and as a recruiting ground for the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army).

In 1928 when Simon Commission toured India and the Indian National Congress decided to boycott this all White Commission, Bhagat Singh and his comrades actively joined the protest movement. In fact, they were a part of that procession which was led by Lala Lajpat Rai. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai, as a result of the brutal lathi charge on the processionists and Scott's lathi blows on the head of Lalaji, enraged Chandra Shekar Azad, Bhagat singh and their comrades so much that they decided to avenge this national insult. However, in their attempt, J.P. Saunders (another police officer) was mistakenly killed instead of Scott. Justifying their action and taking responsibility

for the same, they put up a poster warning the British Indian bureaucracy, and at the same time revealing their deep humanism:

> Really it is horrible to imagine that so lowly and violent hand of an ordinary police officer, J.P. Saunders could ever dare to touch in such an insulting way the body of one so old, so revered and so loved by 300 million people of Hindustan and thus cause his death. The youth and manhood of India was challenged by blows hurled down on the head of India's nationhood. And let the world know that India still lives; that the blood of the youth has not been totally cooled down and that they can still risk their lives, if the honour of their nation is at stake.
>
> Sorry for the death of a man. But in this man has died the representative of an institution which is so cruel, lowly and so base that it must be abolished. In this man has died an agent of British authority in India – the most tyrannical of Governments in the World.
>
> *Sorry for the bloodshed of a human being; but the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of the Revolution that will bring freedom to all and make the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.* (Emphasis added)
>
> *LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!*

The climax of their political action came in 1929 when Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a bomb each in the Legislative Assembly as a protest against two repressive Bills: The Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill. Through the first Bill, the Governor-General-in-Council was to be authorized to remove from India British and foreign Communists and through the second the Government intended to curtail the trade union rights of the workers. Not only would these acts reduce civil liberties in general but also restrict the rights of workers to struggle for their rights. What further

motivated Bhagat Singh to throw the bomb was the wholesale arrests of the trade union leaders leading to the Meerut Conspiracy Case. What is significant about this daring act is that the two bombs were deliberately made harmless. Nor did Bhagat Singh and Dutt try to escape after throwing the bombs. They were arrested and tried in the well known Delhi Bomb Case. During their trial in the District and Sessions court, they made their historic statement: Shouting slogans *Inquilab Zindabad* and *Down with Imperialism*, they stated:

> The bomb was necessarily to awaken England from her dreams. We dropped the bomb on the floor of the Assembly Chamber to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart rendering agony… We have only marked the end of an era of utopian non-violence of whose futility the rising generation has been convinced beyond the shadow of doubt … Force used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause had its moral justification. The elimination of force at all cost is utopian and the new movement, which has arisen in the country and of that dawn we have given a warning is inspired by the ideas which Guru Govind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin preached.

The Sessions Judge sentenced Bhagat Singh and Dutt to transportation (to the Andamans) for life.

Meanwhile, Police were able to collect information about Saunder's assassination and Bhagat singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru and several others were arrested and tried in the infamous Lahore Conspiracy Case. They were tried by a Special Magistrate. As Bhagat Singh and Dutt regarded the trial as a force they used it not to defend themselves but as a forum for propaganda for their cause and organization. They would raise revolutionary slogans and sing revolutionary songs. They also celebrated Kakori Day, Lenin Day and the Anniversary of the Russian Revolution

in the court itself. The Government constituted a Special Three-Man Tribunal to try them. It started its proceedings in early May 1930. But when one of the members, Justice Agha Haider, refused to sign the proceedings on 12 May 1930 because of the inhuman treatment meted out to the revolutionaries, the Tribunal was reconstituted in June 1930. The Special Tribunal delivered its judgment in October 1930 awarding death sentences to Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. They were hanged on 23 March 1931, a day before their death sentences were actually to be carried out.

One important aspect of the tactics of the revolutionaries was the use of every opportunity and every forum for propagating their ideas. As undertrials, Bhagat Singh and his comrades made full use of court proceedings and jail conditions to give vent to their grievances and to highlight the highhandedness of the imperialist system. Using the legal premise that political prisoners should not be treated as criminals, they attacked the pathetic conditions that prevailed in the British courts and jails. When Bhagat Singh and other members of the HSRA were transferred from Delhi to Mianawali and Lahore jails, they found the jail conditions awful. Therefore, Bhagat Singh and his friends took initiative to organize a hunger strike raising demands such as (a) better diet or standard diet as was given to the European prisoners; (b) no hard and undignified labour for them; (c) provision of books, reading materials with at least one national daily to political prisoners; (d) political prisoners in the same jail to be kept in the same ward; (e) no rough treatment during forced feeding; and (f) supply of soap, oil, shaving kit (toilet necessities) and better clothing. Their prolonged hunger strike forced the Government to announce better treatment for the political prisoners. However, when the promise made to them was not actually implemented, they threatened to go on hunger strike again. Their hunger strike

stirred the entire nation and it won them the admiration of every section of nationalist India. The heroic acts of the revolutionaries succeeded in exposing the anti-Indian and arbitrary character of British judicial system and appalling jail conditions.

Another incident that emphasizes Bhagat Singh's defiant courage against British imperialism is the way he reacted to his father's letter, written to the Viceroy and the Tribunal to save his son from gallows. During the final stage of Bhagat Singh's trial, Kishan Singh, moved by fatherly love and affection, wrote the letter suggesting that his son was innocent and should be given an opportunity to defend himself. It angered Bhagat Singh so much that he sent a rather harsh letter to his father. He wrote:

> Father, I am quite perplexed. I fear I might overlook the ordinary principles of etiquette and my language may become a little bit harsh while criticizing or rather censoring this move on your part. Let me be candid. I feel as though I have been stabbed at the back. *Had any other person done it, I would have considered it to be nothing short of treachery. But in your case, let me say that it has been a weakness, a weakness of the worst type.* (Emphasis added).

Bhagat Singh was not merely a brave, courageous and patriotic hero who avenged Lala Lajpat Rai's death or threw a rather harmless bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly, but also was already at a young age – he died when only 23 – an intellectual and a thinker of high caliber. As Shiv Verma, one of Bhagat Singh's colleagues, has pointed out, " As an intellectual Bhagat Singh was far superior to any of us." He was a voracious reader who had acquired an "indepth" understanding of capitalism, socialism, world revolutionary movements, the role of peasants and workers in the struggles against capitalism and imperialism, the history of the Bolshevik Revolution and other

revolutionary movements. The contention that Bhagat Singh made a serious study of national and international developments only while in prison, where he got ample opportunities to study them has been questioned by Bipan Chandra* on two grounds: that the basic ideological formulations of Bhagat Singh were made in the early period of his incarceration on the basis of his earlier reading and thinking and that he had made a great deal of progress in this respect in the pre-1929 period. J.N. Sanyal, his co-prisoner in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, made the following evaluation of Bhagat Singh as an intellectual.

> Bhagat Singh was an extremely well-read man and his special sphere of study was socialism ... though socialism was his special subject, he had deeply studied the history of the Russian revolutionary movement from its beginning in the early 19th century to the October Revolution of 1917. It is generally believed that very few in India could be compared to him in the knowledge of this special subject. The economic experiments in Russia under the Bolshevik regime also greatly interested him.

Of course, this is not to deny that "Bhagat Singh got a chance to (further) grow and develop in prison ...., that continuous development occurred in the thinking of the revolutionaries," both inside and outside the jail.

Bhagat Singh was also a dynamic writer. Within just a period of 7 years (1923-30) he wrote on various subjects like God, mysticism and religion, language, art, literature, culture, biographies of past and contemporary revolutionaries and other political leaders and most important of all on party organization and revolution.

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* Bipan Chandra, "The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s" in *Socialism in India*, B.R. Nanda (ed.), 1972.

Bhagat Singh's view on religion, mysticism and existence of God need some clarification because of a general impression that the revolutionaries were religious people who freely used religion and religious symbols for propagating their ideas. Even though the early revolutionaries were inspired by religion, the leaders of the Ghadar movement and Bhagat Singh and his comrades thought on a different plane. Till the end of his life Bhagat Singh constantly fought against obscurantist, sectarian and communal ideas and ideologies. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that most outstanding and path-breaking treatise on religion and existence of God was written by him during the last days of his life. One cannot but admire the authority and confidence with which he analyzed the highly complex philosophical issue of the existence of God in his Essay "Why I am an Atheist".* Starting with scientific v/s unscientific understanding on the part of man about his natural environment, social organization and social activity, Bhagat Singh analyzed the role of religion and existence of God. As the primitive and weak man (one who is not familiar with the modern scientific developments) could neither understand natural and social phenomena nor could he control his life and overcome its limitations, God became a useful myth. Moreover, to the distressed, the betrayed and the helpless, God serves as 'a father, mother, sister and brother, friend and helper'. Thus both God and religion came to the rescue of man who was neither courageous nor had any scientific and rational understanding of things around him. However, with the progress of modern science, the beginning of the struggle of the oppressed for their

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* Included in this volume but also published by the National Book Trust as a separate booklet with an introduction by Prof. Bipan Chandra. Hence we do not intend to examine Bhagat Singh's ideas on religion and existence of God in detail

emancipation, and man's standing on his own legs, "the need for this artificial crutch, this imaginary saviour comes to an end". Bhagat Singh then pointed out:

> Any man who stands for progress has to criticize, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith.... A man who claims to be a realist has to challenge the whole of the ancient faith... the first thing for him is to shatter the whole down and clear a space for the erection of a new philosophy.

The greatest advance that the revolutionary socialists made was in the definition and development of their aims and objectives. The slogan 'Long Live Revolution' or 'Inquilab Zindabad' that Bhagat Singh and his comrades so enthusiastically popularized among the Indian masses was the true expression of their long term goals, the foremost of which was to liberate India from the British imperialist yoke. This was in consonance with the aspirations of the Indian people. Taking into consideration the reason for the long cherished dream of the Indian masses, Bhagat Singh in the "Philosophy of the Bomb" remarked:

> There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has 'bled us white'. As a race and a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. Do people still expect us to forget and forgive? We shall have our revenge a righteous revenge on the tyrant...

But attainment of independence for their countrymen was not the only objective of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. It was merely a means to achieve the broader goal—creation of a new social order. Establishing a clear link between capitalism and imperialism, Bhagat Singh had come to the conclusion that the

capitalist economic exploitation and the enslavement of nations were inter-linked. Therefore, along with the overthrow of foreign rule he also wanted to end the capitalist exploitative system. Thus attainment of freedom was seen as a means for the creation of a new social order.

Bhagat Singh also clearly realized that the new social order had to be based on 'socialistic principles' because only in a socialist society, "political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility." It was an achievable goal because it was "the inalienable right of mankind". In short, the revolutionary transformation meant "a total struggle – a struggle without compromise, a struggle in which the victory had to be total." Bhagat Singh's and Batukeshwar Dutt's statements, read out in the sessions court by Asaf Ali, was the best exposition of their understanding of 'revolution'.

> By "Revolution" we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognized and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars.

What would be the results of such a revolutionary transformation? They answered the question in the following words:

> The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges. It will bring joy and prosperity to the starving millions who are scathing today under the terrible yoke of both foreign and Indian exploiters. It will bring the nation in its own. It will give birth to a new state – a new order. Above all, it will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and will for ever banish social parasites from the seat of political power.

As a result of this thinking, which Bhagat Singh and the revolutionaries arrived at after a prolonged debate and discussion, they changed the name of their earlier revolutionary organization – 'Hindustan Republican Association' into 'Hindustan Socialist Republican Association'. Thus they accepted 'socialism' as the ultimate goal of their movement. As the Manifesto of the HSRA concluded:

> The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, concentrated on socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete independence and removal of all social distinction (distinctions) and privileges.

In fact, interestingly, Bhagat Singh looked upon himself mainly as a propagator of the ideas of socialism rather than as a great freedom fighter. For example, writing to Sukhdev, who was tormented by doubts while waiting for the hangman to carry out their execution, Bhagat Singh remarked:

> If we had not entered the field, would it have meant that no revolutionary action would have occurred? You are wrong if you think so. It is true that we helped to a large extent change the (political) atmosphere. At the same time, we are mere products of the necessity of our times. I would even say that the creator of Communism, Marx, was in fact not the creator of this ideology. It was the Industrial Revolution in Europe which produced many persons of a particular way of thinking. Marx was just one of these men. In his situation Marx undoubtedly helped impart a particular motion to the movement of his times. I and you have not created the socialist or communist ideas in this country. On the other hand, they are the result of the impact on us of our time and circumstances. Undoubtedly, we have contributed in a simple and humble manner to the propagation of these ideas.

Who would bring about the desired change? Or what would be the social base of their movement? According to Bhagat Singh and other revolutionary socialists, it was to be brought about by the common people, the Indian masses, the workers and peasants, the youth and the intelligentsia. That was the reason why in all their writings they emphasized the necessity for the mobilization of these sections of the Indian society. For the adequate and successful involvement of these elements in the revolutionary process, they decided to set up a separate, open, legal and mass wing of the Party. Naujawan Bharat Sabha had been organized with that end in mind, and Bhagat Singh declared in 1931 that, "our main task should be the organization of peasants and workers." All their acts were directed to that end so that a new mass awakening could be created. However, in practice, as a first step, they pinned all their hopes on the radical nationalist youth who, according to them, had to be the vanguard of the revolution. It was this youth who was to act on behalf of and also to arouse peasants and workers' consciousness in the cause of revolution. That is why in 1929 the HSRA made an appeal to the youth of the country:

> The future of India rests with the youth. They are the salt of the earth. Their promptness to suffer, their daring courage and their radiant sacrifice prove that India's future in their hands is perfectly safe ... Youth – Ye soldiers of the Indian Republic, fall in. Do not stand easy, do not let your knees tremble.... Yours is a noble Mission. Go out in every nook and corner of the country and prepare the ground for future Revolution which is sure to come .... Do not vegetate. Grow!.... Sow the seeds of disgust and hatred against British Imperialism in the fertile minds of your fellow youth. And the seeds shall sprout and their shall grow a jungle of sturdy trees, because you shall water the seeds with your warm blood.

Bhagat Singh showed a great and mature understanding in another area of Indian politics; he understood the great danger that communalism posed to Indian society and Indian nationalism. He told his comrades that communalism was as great an enemy of the Indian people as colonialism. Religion, he said, should be viewed as the private concern of a person. Two of the six rules of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, of which he was the Founding General Secretary, were: "To have nothing to do with communal bodies, or other parties which disseminate communal ideas" and to "create the spirit of general toleration among the public, considering religion as a matter of personal belief of man and to act upon it fully".

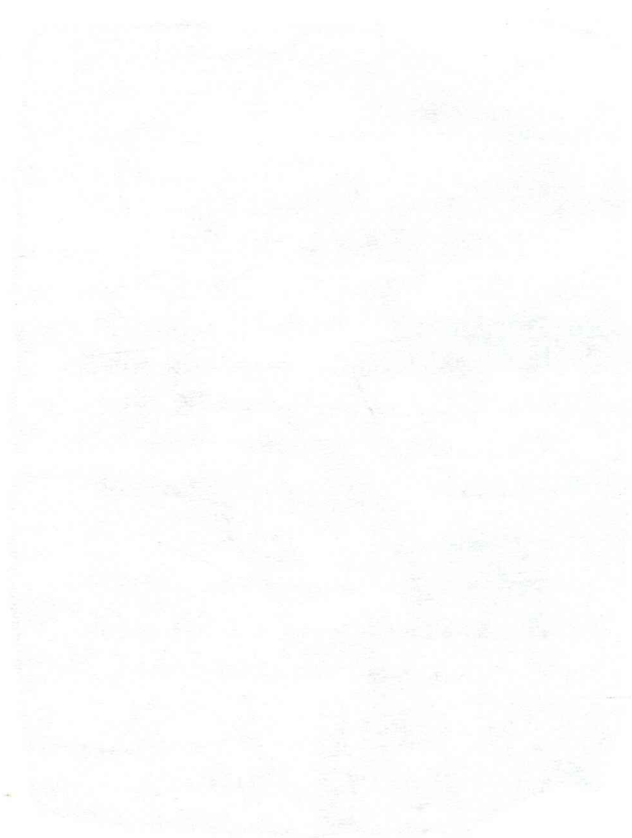
With this understanding about the role of the radical youth, these young men took the lead in the making of Indian revolution and sacrificed their lives for their mother country.

We can sum up by saying that as long as exploitation of 'man by man' continues and till the old, unjust and exploitative system is not transformed into a new one on the lines suggested by Bhagat Singh, his slogan, '*Long Live Revolution*' or '*Inquilab Zindabad*' will continue to reverberate as a source of inspiration to all of us – Bhagat Singh's countrymen.

D.N. GUPTA

PART–I

SPEECHES & WRITINGS



Blood Sprinkled on the Day of Holi: Babbar Akalis on the Crucifix*

Bhagat Singh wrote this article on the crucifixion of the six Babbar Akalis for the Hindi Paper *Pratap*, published from Kanpur by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. Tracing the history of the Babbar Akali Movement, he praised their acts of courage and bravery. He expressed his pain and anger at the fact that the leaders of the movement were executed on the day of the Holi festival, 27 February 1926.

On the day of Holi, February 27, 1926, when we were getting high on our enjoyment, a terrible thing was happening in a corner of this great province. When you will hear it, you will shudder! You will tremble! On that day, six brave Babbar Akalis were hanged in the Lahore Central Jail. Shri Kishan Singhji Gadagajja, Shri Santa Singhji, Shri Dilip Sinhghji, Shri Nand Singhji, Shri Karam Singhji and Shri Dharam Singhji had been showing a great indifference to the trial for the last two years, which speaks of their fond waiting for this day. After months, the judge gave his verdict. Five to be hanged, many for life imprisonment or exile, and sentences of very long imprisonments. The accused heroes thundered. Even the skies echoed with their triumphant slogans. Then an appeal was prefered. Instead of five, now six were sent to the noose. The same day the news came that a mercy petition was sent. The Punjab Secretary declared that the hanging would be put off.

* Translated from Hindi original.

We were waiting but, all of a sudden, on the very day of Holi, we saw a small contingent of mourners carrying the dead bodies of the heroes towards the cremation site. Then last rites were completed quietly.

The city was still celebrating. Colour was still being thrown on the passers-by. What a terrible indifference. If they were misguided, if they were frenzied, let them be so. They were fearless patriots, in any case. Whatever they did, they did it for this wretched country. They could not bear injustice. They could not countenance the fallen nation. The oppression on the poor people became insufferable for them. They could not tolerate exploitation of the masses, they challenged and jumped into action. They were full of life. Oh! the terrible toll of their dedicated deeds! You are blessed! After the death, friends and foes are all alike—this is the ideal of men. Even if they might have done something hateful, their courage and the dedication shown in surrendering their lives at the altar of our nation, is something to be worshipped. Even Mr. Tegart, in spite of being on the opposite side, could highly and uninhibitedly appreciate the courage, patriotism and commitment of the brave revolutionary of Bengal, Jatin Mukherjee, while mourning his death. But we the cowards and human wretches lack the courage of even sighing and putting off our celebrations even for a moment. What a disheartening deed! The poor! they were given the "adequate" punishment even by the standard of the brutal bureaucrats for the crime they committed in the eyes of these bureaucrats. An act of a terrible tragedy thus ended, but the curtain is not down as yet. The drama will have some more terrible scenes. The story is quite lengthy, we have to turn back a little to know about it.

The Non-Cooperation Movement was at its peak. The Punjab did not lag behind. The Sikhs also rose from their deep slumber and it was quite an awakening. The Akali Movement

has started. Sacrifices were made in abundance. Master Mota Singh, ex-teacher of Khalsa Middle School, Mahalpur (district Hoshiarpur), delivered a speech. A warrant was issued against him, but the idea of availing of the hospitality of the crown did not find his favour. He was against offering arrest to fill the jails. His speeches still continued. In Kot-Phatuhi village, a big 'Deevan' was called. Police cordoned the area off from all sides; even then Master Mota Singh delivered his speech. The whole audience stood up and dispersed on the orders of the president of the meeting. The Master escaped mysteriously. This hide-and-seek continued for long. The government was in a frenzy. At last, a friend turned traitor, and Master Saheb was arrested after a year and a half. This was the first scene of that horrible drama.

The "Guru ka bagh" movement was started. The hired hoodlums were there to attack the unarmed heroes and to beat them half-dead. Could anyone who looked at or listened to this, help being moved? It was a case of arrests and arrests everywhere. A warrant was also issued against Sardar Kishan Singhji Gadagajja, but he also belonged to the same category and did not offer arrest. The police strained all its nerves but he always escaped. He had an organisation of his own. He could not bear the violence against unarmed agitators. He felt the need of using arms along with this peaceful movement.

On the one hand, the dogs, the hunting dogs of the government, were searching for the clues, to get his scent; on the other, it was decided to "reform" the sycophants (*Jholi Chukkas*). Sardar Kishan Singhji used to say that we must keep ourselves armed for our own security, but we should not take any precipitative action for the time being. The majority was against this. At last, it was decided that three of them should give their names, take all the blame on themselves and start reforming these sycophants. Sardar Karam Singhji, Sardar

Dhanna Singhji and Sardar Uday Singhji stepped forward. Just keep aside the question of its propriety for a moment and imagine the scene when they took the oath:

We will sacrifice our all in the service of the country. We swear to die fighting but not to go to the prison.

What a beautiful, sanctified scene it must have been, when these people who had given up all of their family affections, were taking such an oath! Where is the end of sacrifice? Where is the limit to courage and fearlessness? Where does the extremity of idealism reside?

Near a station on Shyam Churasi-Hoshiarpur railway branch line, a Subedar became the first victim. After that, all these three declared their names. The government tried its best to arrest them, but failed. Sardar Kishan Singh Gadagajja was once almost trapped by the police near Roorki Kalan. A young man who accompanied him, fell down after getting injured, and was captured. But even there, Kishan Singhji escaped with the help of his arms. He met a Sadhu on the way who told him about a herb in his possession which could materialise all his plans and work miracles. Sardarji believed him and visited this Sadhu unarmed. The Sadhu gave him some herbs to prepare and brought the police in the meanwhile. Sardar Saheb was arrested. That Sadhu was an inspector of the CID department.

The Babbar Akalis stepped up their activities. Many pro-government men were killed. The *doab* land lying in between Beas and Sutlej, that is, the districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, had been there on the political map of the country, even before this. The majority of martyrs of 1915 belonged to these districts. Now again, there was the upheaval. The police department used all its power at its command, which proved quite useless. There is a small river near Jullundur; "Chaunta Sahib" Gurudwara is located there in a village on the banks of the river. There Shri Karam Singhji, Shri Dhanna Singhji, Shri Uday Singhji and

Shri Anoop Singhji were sitting with a few others, preparing tea. All of a sudden, Shri Dhanna Singhji said: "Baba Karam Singhji! We should at once leave this place. I sense something very inauspicious happening." The 75-year old Sardar Karam Singh showed total indifference, but Shri Dhanna Singhji left the place, along with his 18-year old follower Dilip Singh. Quite suddenly Baba Karam Singh stared at Anoop Singh and said: "Anoop Singh, you are not a good person", but after this, he himself became unmindful of his own premonition. They were still talking when police reached there. All the bombs were in the possession of Anoop Singh. They rushed to take refuge in a village. The police did its best, but failed. At last, the police made a declaration: Send out the rebels, otherwise the village will be burnt down. But the villagers did not yield.

Seeing all this, they themselves came out. Anoop Singh ran with all the bombs and surrendered. The remaining four people were standing, surrounded from all sides. The British police captain said: "Karam Singh! drop the weapons and you will be pardoned." The hero responded challengingly: "We will die a martyr's death while fighting, as a real revolutionary, for the sake of our motherland, but we shall not surrender our weapons." He inspiringly called his comrades. They also roared like lions. A fight ensued. Bullets flew in all directions. After their ammunition exhausted, these brave people jumped into the river and bravely died after hours of ceaseless fighting.

Sardar Karam Singh was 75 years old. He had been in Canada. His character was pure and behaviour ideal. The government concluded that the Babbar Akalis were finished, but actually they grew in strength. The 18-year old Dilip Singh was a very handsome and strong, well-built, though illiterate, young man. He had joined some dacoit gang. His association with Shri Dhanna Singhji turned him from a dacoit into a real revolutionary. Many notorious dacoits like Banta Singh and

Variyam Singh, too, gave up dacoity and joined them.

They were not afraid of death. They were eager to wash away their old sins. They were increasing in number day-by-day. One day when Dhanna Singh was sitting in a village named Mauhana, the police was called. Dhanna Singh was down with drinks and caught without resistance. His revolver was snatched, he was handcuffed and brought out. Twelve policemen and two British officers had surrounded him. Exactly at that moment there was a thunderous noise of an explosion. It was the bomb exploded by Dhanna Singhji. He died on the spot along with one British officer and ten policemen. All the rest were badly wounded.

In the same fashion, Banta Singh, Jwala Singh and some others were surrounded in a village named Munder. They all were gathered on the roof of a house. Shots were fired, a cross-fire ensued for some time, but then the police sprinkled kerosene oil by a pump and set the house on fire. Banta Singh was killed there, but Variyam Singh escaped even from there.

It will not be improper here to describe a few more similar incidents. Banta Singh was a very courageous man. Once he snatched a horse and a rifle from the guard of the armoury in the Jullundur Cantonment. Those days several police squads were desperately looking for him; one such squad confronted him somewhere in the forest. Sardar Saheb challenged them immediately: "If you have courage, come and confront me." On that side, there were slaves of money; on this side, the willing sacrifice of life. There was no comparison of motives. The police squad beat a retreat.

This was the condition of the special police squads deputed to arrest them. Anyway, arrests had become a routine. Police checkposts were erected in almost every village. Gradually, the Babbar Akalis were weakened. Till now it had seemed as if they were the virtual rulers. Wherever they happened to be visiting,

they were warmly hosted, by some with fear and terror. The supporters of the regime were defeatists. They lacked the courage to move out of their residences between the sunset and the sunrise. They were the 'heroes' of the time. They were brave and their worship was believed to be a kind of hero-worship, but gradually they lost their strength. Hundreds among them were imprisoned, and cases were instituted against them.

Variyam Singh was the lone survivor. He was moving towards Layallpur, as the pressure of police had increased in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur. One day he was hopelessly surrounded there, but he came out fighting valiantly. He was very much exhausted. He was alone. It was a strange situation. One day he visited his maternal uncle in the village named Dhesian. Arms were kept outside. After taking his meals, he was moving towards his weaponry when the police arrived. He was surrounded. The British officer caught him from the backside. He wounded him badly with his *kripan* (sword), and he fell down. All the efforts to handcuff him failed.

After two years of suppression, the Akali Jatha came to an end. Then the cases started, one of which has been discussed above. Quite recently too, they had wished to be hanged soon. Their wish has been fulfilled; they are now quiet.

Beware, Ye Bureacuracy: Notice of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army)

In 1928, while leading a massive procession in Lahore to protest against Simon Commission, Lala Lajpat Rai suffered serious injuries in the police lathicharge. He succumbed subsequently to his injuries. Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and other comrades vowed to take revenge. However, by mistake the revolutionaries, Bhagat Singh, Azad and Rajguru assassinated J.P. Saunders instead of Scott, on 17 December 1928. In this poster put up in various places in Lahore they expressed their regret as they identified Saunders with the oppressive and exploitative imperialist system.

J.P. Saunders is dead; Lala Lajpat Rai is avenged

Really it is horrible to imagine that so lowly and violent hand of an ordinary Police Official, J.P. Saunders could ever dare to touch in such an insulting way the body of one so old, so revered and so loved by 300 million people of Hindustan and thus cause his death. The youth and manhood of India was challenged by blows hurled down on the head of the India's nationhood. And let the world know that India still lives; that the blood of youth has not been totally cooled down and that they can still risk their lives, if the honour of their nation is at stake. And it is proved through this act by those obscure who are ever persecuted, condemned and denounced even by their own people.

"Beware, Ye Tyrants; Beware"

Do not injure the feelings of a downtrodden and oppressed

country. Think twice before perpetrating such diabolical deed. And remember that despite 'Arms Act' and strict guards against the smuggling of arms, the revolvers will ever continue to flow in—if not sufficient at present for and armed revolt, then at least sufficient to avenge the national insults. In spite of all the denunciations and condemnation of their own kiths and kins, and ruthless repression and persecution of the alien government, party of young men will ever live to teach a lesson to the haughty rulers. They will be so bold as to cry even amidst the raging storm of opposition and repression, even on the scaffold:

"LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION"!

Sorry for the death of a man. But in this man has died the representative of an institution which is so cruel, lowly and so base that it must be abolished. In this man has died an agent of the British authority in India—the most tyrannical of Govt. of Govts. in the world.

Sorry for the bloodshed of a human being; but the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of the Revolution that will bring freedom to all and make the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

Sd/- Balraj*

Dated 18 December 1928 Commander-in-Chief

* "Balraj" was the pseudonym of Chandra Shekhar Azad, the Commander-in-chief of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army).

To Make the Deaf Hear: Notice of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

Along with the bomb that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw in the Central Legislative Assembly on 8 April 1929, they also threw leaflets outlining their aims and objectives. Declaring that they wanted 'to make the deaf hear', they owned full responsibility for their act.

"It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear." With these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Valliant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours.

Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the reforms and without mentioning the insults hurled down on the head of the Indian nation through this House, the so-called Indian Parliament, we see that this time again, while the people expecting some more crumbs of reforms from the Simon Commission, are ever quarrelling over the distribution of the expected bones, the Govt. is thrusting upon us new repressive measures like those of the Public Safety and Trade Disputes Bill, while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of labour leaders working in the open field clearly indicate whither the wind blows.

In these extremely provocative circumstances, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, in all seriousness, realising the full responsibility, had decided and ordered its army to do this particular action, so that a stop be put to this

humiliating farce and to let the alien bureaucratic exploiters do what they wish, but to make them come before the public eye in their naked form.

Let the representatives of the people return to their constituencies and prepare the masses for the coming revolution. And let the Government know that, while protesting against the Public Safety and Trade Disputes Bills and the callous murder of Lala Lajpat Rai on behalf of the helpless Indian masses, we want to emphasise the lesson often repeated by history that it is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled but the ideas survived. Bourbons and Czars fell while the revolution marched ahead triumphantly.

We are sorry to admit that we who attach so great a sanctity to human life, who dream of a glorious future, when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood. But the sacrifice of individuals at the altar of the great revolution that will bring freedom to all, rendering the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

Sd/-
Balraj
Commander-in-Chief

On the Slogan of Long Live Revolution

In reply to Ramanand Chatterjee's editorial in the *Modern Review* ridiculing the slogan 'Long Live Revolution', Bhagat Singh in a letter to the editor explained the meaning, objective and significance of the slogan. The letter was published in *The Telegraph* on 24 December, 1929.

The Editor, *Modern Review*

You have in the December (1929) issue of your esteemed magazine, written a note under the caption "Long Live Revolution", and have pointed out the meaninglessness of this phrase. It would be impertinent on our part to try to refute or contradict the statement of such an old, experienced and renowned journalist as your noble self, for whom every enlightened Indian has profound admiration. Still we feel it our duty to explain what we desire to convey by the said phrase, as in a way it fell to our lot to give these "cries" a publicity in this country at this stage.

We are not the originators of this cry. The same cry had been used in Russian revolutionary movement. Upton Sinclair, the well-known socialist writer, has, in his recent novels *Boston* and *Oil*, used this cry through some of the anarchist revolutionary characters. The phrase never means that the sanguinary strife should ever continue, or that nothing should ever be stationary even for a short while. By long usage this cry achieves a significance which may not be quite justifiable from the grammatical or the etymological point of view, but nevertheless we cannot abstract from that the association of ideas

connected with that. All such shouts denote a general sense which is partly acquired and partly inherent in them. For instance, when we shout "Long Live Jatin Das", we cannot and do not mean thereby that Das should physically be alive. What we mean by that shout is that the noble ideal of his life, the indomitable spirit which enabled that great martyr to bear such untold suffering and to make the extreme sacrifice for that ideal, should ever live. By raising this cry we wish that we may show the same unfailing courage in pursuance of our ideal. It is that spirit that we allude to.

Similarly, one should not interpret the word "Revolution" in its literal sense. Various meanings and significances are attributed to this word, according to the interests of those who use or misuse it. For the established agencies of exploitation, it conjures up a feeling of blood stained horror. To the revolutionaries it is a sacred phrase. We tried to clear in our statement before the Sessions Judge, Delhi, in our trial in the Assembly Bomb Case, what we mean by the word "Revolution".

We stated therein that Revolution did not necessarily involve sanguinary strife. It was not a cult of bomb and pistol. They may sometimes be mere means for its achievement. No doubt they play a prominent part in some movements, but they do not—for that very reason—become one and the same thing. A rebellion is not a revolution. It may ultimately lead to that end.

The sense in which the word Revolution is used in that phrase, is the spirit, the longing for a change for the better. The people generally get accustomed to the established order of things and begin to tremble at the very idea of a change. It is this lethargical spirit that needs be replaced by the revolutionary spirit. Otherwise degeneration gains the upper hand and the whole humanity is led stray by the reactionary forces. Such a state of affairs leads to stagnation and paralysis in human

progress. The spirit of Revolution should always permeate the soul of humanity, so that the reactionary forces may not accumulate (strength) to check its eternal onward march. Old order should change, always and ever, yielding place to new, so that one "good" order may not corrupt the world. It is in this sense that we raise the shout "Long Live Revolution".

Yours sincerely
(Sd/-)
Bhagat Singh
B.K. Dutt

Statement in the Sessions Court

The statement of Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt was read out by Mr. Asaf Ali in the Sessions Court trying them on 6 June 1929. The statement drafted by Bhagat Singh, is the policy document of the aims and objectives of the revolutionary movement in India.

We stand charged with certain serious offences, and at this stage it is but right that we must explain our conduct.

In this connection, the following questions arise:

1. Were the bombs thrown into Chamber, and, if so, why?
2. Is the charge, as framed by the Lower Court, correct or otherwise?

To the first half of first question, our reply is in the affirmative, but since some of the so-called 'eye witnesses' have perjured themselves and since we are not denying our liability to that extent, let our statement about them be judged for what it is worth. By way of an illustration, we may point out that the evidence of Sergeant Terry regarding the seizure of the pistol from one of us is a deliberate falsehood, for neither of us had the pistol at the time we gave ourselves up. Other witnesses, too, who have deposed to having seen bombs being thrown by us have not scrupled to tell lies. This fact had its own moral for those who aim at judicial purity and fair play.

At the same time, we acknowledge the fairness of the Public Prosecutor and the judicial attitude of the Court so far.

Viceroy's Views Endorsed

In our reply to the next half of the first question, we are constrained to go into some detail to offer a full and frank explanation of our motive and the circumstances leading up to what has now become a historic event.

When we were told by some of the police officers, who visited us in jail, that Lord Irwin, in his address to the joint session of the two houses described the event as an attack directed against no individual but against an institution itself, we readily recognized that the true significance of the incident had been correctly appreciated.

We are next to none in our love for humanity. Far from having any malice against any individual, we hold human life sacred beyond words.

We are neither perpetrators of dastardly outrages, and, therefore, a disgrace to the country, as the pseudo-socialist Dewan Chaman Lal is reported to have described us, nor are we 'lunatics' as *The Tribune* of Lahore and some others would have it believed.

Practical Protest

We humbly claim to be no more than serious students of the history and conditions of our country and her aspirations. We despise hypocrisy. Our practical protest was against the institution, which since its birth, has eminently helped to display not only its worthlessness but its far-reaching power for mischief. The more we have pondered, the more deeply we have been convinced that it exists only to demonstrate to the world India's humiliation and helplessness, and it symbolises the overriding domination of an irresponsible and autocratic rule. Time and again the national demand has been pressed by the people's representatives only to find the waste paper basket as its final destination.

Attack on Institution

Solemn resolutions passed by the House have been contemptuously trampled underfoot on the floor of the so called Indian Parliament. Resolution regarding the repeal of the repressive and arbitrary measures have been treated with sublime contempt, and the government measures and proposals, rejected as unacceptable by the elected members of the legislatures, have been restored by mere stroke of the pen. In short, we have utterly failed to find any justification for the existence of an institution which, despite all its pomp and splendour, organised with the hard earned money of the sweating millions of India, is only a hollow show and a mischievous make-believe. Alike, have we failed to comprehend the mentality of the public leaders who help the government to squander public time and money on such a manifestly stage-managed exhibition of India's helpless subjection.

No Hope for Labour

We have been ruminating upon all these matters, as also upon the wholesale arrests of the leaders of the labour movement when the introduction of the Trade Disputes Bill brought us into the Assembly to watch its progress. The course of the debate only served to confirm our conviction that the labouring millions of India had nothing to expect from an institution that stood as a menacing monument to the strangling of the exploiters and the serfdom of the helpless labourers.

Finally, the insult of what we consider, an inhuman and barbarous measure was hurled on the devoted heads of the representatives of the entire country, and the starving and struggling millions were deprived of their primary right and the sole means of improving their economic welfare. None who has felt like us for the dumb-driven drudges of labourers could possibly witness this spectacle with equanimity. None whose

heart bleeds for them, who have given their life-blood in silence to the building up of the economic structure, could repress the cry which this ruthless blow had wrung out of our hearts.

Bomb Needed

Consequently, bearing in mind the words of the late Mr. S.R. Das, once Law Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council, which appeared in the famous letter he had addressed to his son, to the effect that the 'Bomb was necessary to awaken England from her dreams', we dropped the bomb on the floor of the Assembly Chamber to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart-rending agony. Our sole purpose was "to make the deaf hear" and to give the heedless a timely warning. Others have as keenly felt as we have done, and from under the seeming stillness of the sea of Indian humanity, a veritable storm is about to break out. We have only hoisted the "danger-signal" to warn those who are speeding along without heeding the grave dangers ahead. We have only marked the end of an era of Utopian non-violence, of whose futility the rising generation has been convinced beyond the shadow of doubt.

Ideal Explained

We have used the expression Utopian non-violence, in the foregoing paragraph, which requires some explanation. Force when aggressively applied is "violence" and is, therefore, morally unjustifiable, but when it is used in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it has its moral justification. The elimination of force at all costs is Utopian, and the mew movement which has arisen in the country, and of that dawn we have given a warning, is inspired by the ideals which guided Guru Gobind Singh and Shivaji, Kamal Pasha and Riza Khan, Washington and Garibaldi, Lafayette and Lenin.

As both the alien government and the Indian public leaders appeared to have shut their eyes to the existence of this movement, we felt it is our duty to sound a warning where it could not go unheard.

We have so far dealt with the motive behind the incident in question, and now we must define the extent of our intention.

No Personal Grudge

We bore no personal grudge or malice against anyone of those who received slight injuries or against any other person in the Assembly. On the contrary, we repeat that we hold human life sacred beyond words, and would sooner lay down our own lives in the service of humanity than injure anyone else. Unlike the mercenary soldiers of the imperialist armies who are disciplined to kill without compunction, we respect, and, in so far as it lies in our power, we attempt to save human life. And still we admit to having deliberately thrown the bombs into the Assembly Chamber. Facts speak for themselves and our intention would be judged from the result of the action without bringing in Utopian hypothetical circumstances and presumptions.

No Miracle

Despite the evidence of the government expert, the bombs that were thrown in the Assembly Chamber resulted in slight damage to an empty bench and some slight abrasions in less than half a dozen cases. While government scientists and experts have ascribed this result to a miracle, we see nothing but a precisely scientific process in all this incident. Firstly, the two bombs exploded in vacant spaces within the wooden barriers of the desks and benches; secondly, even those who were within 2 feet of the explosion, for instance, Mr. P. Rau, Mr. Shanker Rao and Sir George Schuster were either not hurt or only slightly scratched. Bombs of the capacity deposed to by the government

expert (though his estimate, being imaginary, is exaggerated), loaded with an effective charge of potassium chlorate and sensitive (explosive) picrate, would have smashed the barriers and laid many low within some yards of the explosion.

Again, had they been loaded with some other high explosive, with a charge of destructive pellets or darts, they would have sufficed to wipe out a majority of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. Still again we could have flung them into the official box which was occupied by some notable persons. And finally we could have ambushed Sir John Simon whose luckless Commission was loathed by all responsible people and who was sitting in the President's gallery at the time. All these things, however, were beyond our intention and bombs did no more than they were designed to do, and the miracle consisted in no more than the deliberate aim which landed them in safe places.

We then deliberately offered ourselves to bear the penalty for what we had done and to let the imperialist exploiters know that by crushing individuals, they cannot kill ideas. By crushing two insignificant units, a nation cannot be crushed. We wanted to emphasise the historical lesson that *lettres de cachets* and Bastilles could not crush the revolutionary movement in France. Gallows and the Siberian mines could not extinguish the Russian Revolution. Bloody Sunday, and Black and Tans failed to strangle the movement of Irish freedom.

Can ordinances and Safety Bills snuff out the flames of freedom in India? Conspiracy cases, trumped up or discovered, and the incarceration of all young men who cherish the vision of a great ideal, cannot check the march of revolution. But a timely warning, if not unheeded, can help to prevent loss of life and general sufferings.

We took it upon ourselves to provide this warning and our duty is done.

"Revolution"* does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta. It is not the cult of the bomb and the pistol. By "Revolution" we mean that the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice, must change. Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights. The peasant who grows corn for all, starves with his family; the weaver who supplies the world market with textile fabrics, has not enough to cover his own and his children's bodies; masons, smiths and carpenters who raise magnificent palaces, live like pariahs in the slums. The capitalists and exploiters, the parasites of society, squander millions on their whims. These terrible inequalities and forced disparity of chances are bound to lead to chaos. This state of affairs cannot last long, and it is obvious, that the present order of society in merry-making is on the brink of a volcano.

The whole edifice of this civilisation, if not saved in time, shall crumble. A radical change, therefore, is necessary and it is the duty of those who realise it to reorganise society on the socialistic basis. Unless this thing is done and the exploitation of man by man and of nations by nations is brought to an end, sufferings and carnage with which humanity is threatened today cannot be prevented. All talk of ending war and ushering in an era of universal peace is undisguised hypocrisy.

By "Revolution", we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such breakdown, and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat should be recognised and a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars.

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* Bhagat Singh's answer to the question in the lower court on what he meant by the word "Revolution".

This is our ideal, and with this ideology as our inspiration, we have given a fair and loud enough warning.

If, however, it goes unheeded and the present system of government continues to be an impediment in the way of the natural forces that are swelling up, a grim struggle will ensure involving the overthrow of all obstacles, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat to pave the way for the consummation of the ideal of revolution. Revolution is an inalienable right of mankind. Freedom is an imperishable birth right of all. Labour is the real sustainer of society. The sovereignty of the people is the ultimate destiny of the workers.

For these ideals, and for this faith, we shall welcome any suffering to which we may be condemned. At the altar of this revolution we have brought our youth as an incense, for no sacrifice is too great for so magnificent a cause. We are content, we await the advent of Revolution.

Long Live The Revolution.

On the LCC Ordinance (Appointment of the Special Tribunal)

The revolutionaries made full use of all platforms and force to propagate their aims and objects. Bhagat Singh criticised the justification which the Viceroy of India had advanced in appointing a three-judge High Court Tribunal to try them.

To

His Excellency
The Governor-General of India
Simla

Sir,

The full text of the special Ordinance to expedite our trial has been read over to us. The Tribunal has also been appointed by the Chief Justice of the Punjab High Court of Juridicature. We welcome the news. We could have kept silent, had you not referred to our attitude adopted so far in this case, and thus tried to throw the sole responsibility on our shoulders. In the present situation, we feel it necessary to make a statement to clear our position.

We have been marking from the very beginning that the Govt. authorities have always been trying to deliberately misrepresent us. After all, this is a fight, and the misrepresentation is and has always been the best instrument in the hands of the Govt. to meet their enemies. We have absolutely no grudge against this mean tactic. However, there are certain things the

consideration of which is forcing us to make the following counter.

You have mentioned in your statement issued alongwith the Lahore Conspiracy Ordinance, our hunger strike. As you have yourself admitted, two of us had begun the hunger strike weeks before the commencement of the inquiry into this case in the court of R.S Pt. Sri Krishan, Special Magistrate. Hence any man with the least common sense can understand that the hunger strike had nothing to do with the trial. There were sound reasons for beginning the hunger strike. The Govt. had to admit the existence of these grievances. When the Govt. made some gesture as to making certain arrangements for the settlement of this question, and Provincial Jail Enquiry Committees were appointed for the same purpose, we gave up the hunger strike. But at first we were informed that the question would be finally settled in November. Then it was postponed till December. But January also passed and there was not the least to indicate as to whether the Govt. was going to do anything in this connection at all, or not. We feared that the matter was shelved. Hence the second hunger strike on 4th February 1930, after full one week's notice. It was only then that the Govt. tried to settle this question finally. A Communique was published and we again gave up the hunger strike and did not even wait to see the final decision, in this connection, carried into effect. It is only today that we are realising that the British Govt. has not yet given up the policy of telling lies even in such ordinary matters as this. This Communique is in specific terms, but we find something quite contrary in practice. Anyhow, this is not the proper place to discuss that question; we might have to deal with it later on, if the occasion so arises. But what we want to emphasise here is that the hunger strike was never directed against the proceedings of the court. Such great sufferings cannot be invited and such great sacrifice cannot be made with that ordinary motive. Das

did not lay down his life for such a trivial cause. Rajguru and others did not risk their lives simply to protract the trial.

You know thoroughly well, and everybody concerned knows it, that it is not the hunger strike that has forced you to promulgate this Ordinance. There is something else the consideration of which confused the heads of your Government. It is neither the protraction of the case nor any other emergency which forces you to sign this lawless law. It is certainly something different.

But let us declare once and for all that our spirits cannot be cowed down by ordinances. You may crush certain individuals but you cannot crush this nation. As far as this Ordinance is concerned, we consider it to be our victory. We had been from the very beginning pointing out that this existing law was a mere make-believe. It could not administer justice. But even those privileges to which the accused were legitimately and legally entitled and which are given to ordinary accused, could not be given to the accused in political cases. We wanted to make the Govt. throw off its veil and to be candid enough to admit that fair chances for defence could not be given to the political accused. Here we have the frank admission of the Government. We congratulate you as well as your Govt. for this candour and welcome the Ordinance.

In spite of the frank admission of your agents, the Special Magistrate and the Prosecution Counsels, as to the reasonableness of our attitude throughout, you had been confused at the very thought of the existence of our case. What else is needed to assure us of our success in this fight.

Statement Before the Lahore High Court Bench*

The statement demolished the basis on which the revolutionaries had been awarded a sentence for life in the Assembly Bomb Case. They emphasized the significance of motive in any trial and therefore criticized the arguments of the sessions judge in his judgment.

My Lords,

We are neither lawyers nor masters of English language, nor holders of degrees. Therefore, please do not expect any oratorial speech from us. We therefore pray that instead of going into the language mistakes of our statement Your Lordships will try to understand the real sense of it.

Leaving other points to our lawyers, I will confine myself to one point only. The point is very important in this case. The point is as to what were our intentions and to what extent we are guilty. This is a very complicated question and no one will be able to express before you that height of mental elevation which inspired us to think and act in a particular manner. We want that this should be kept in mind while assessing our intentions and our offence. According to the famous jurist Solomon, one should not be punished for his criminal offence if his aim is not against law.

We had submitted a written statement in the Sessions Court. That statement explains our aim and, as such, explains

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* The original English text could not be traced; Hindi and Urdu translations, however, were available. We have, therefore, re-translated it from Hindi.

our intentions also. But the learned judge dismissed it with one stroke of pen, saying that "generally the operation of law is not affected by how or why one committed the offence. In this country the aim of the offence is very rarely mentioned in legal commentaries."

My Lords, our contention is that under the circumstances the learned judge ought to have judged us either by the result of our action or on the basis of the psychological part of our statement. But he did not take any of these factors into consideration.

The point to be considered is that the two bombs we threw in the Assembly did not harm anybody physically or economically. As such the punishment awarded to us is not only very harsh but revengeful also. Moreover, the motive of the offence of an accused cannot be found out without knowing his psychology. And no one can do justice to anybody without taking his motive into consideration. If we ignore the motive, the biggest general of the world will appear like ordinary murderer; revenue officers will look like thieves and cheats. Even judges will be accused of murder. This way the entire social system and the civilisation will be reduced to murders, thefts and cheating. If we ignore the motive, the government will have no right to expect sacrifice from its people and its officials. Ignore the motive and every religious preacher will be dubbed as a preacher of falsehoods, and every prophet will be charged of misguiding crores of simple and ignorant people.

If we set aside the motive, then Jesus Christ will appear to be a man responsible for creating disturbances, breaking peace and preaching revolt, and will be considered to be a "dangerous personality" in the language of the law. But we worship him. He commands great respect in our hearts and his image creates vibrations of spiritualism amongst us. Why? Because the inspiration behind his actions was that of a high ideal. The rulers

of that age could not recognise that high idealism. They only saw his outward actions. Nineteen centuries have passed since then. Have we not progressed during this period? Shall we repeat that mistake again? If that be so, then we shall have to admit that all the sacrifices of mankind and all the efforts of the great martyrs were useless and it would appear as if we are still at the same place where we stood twenty centuries back.

From the legal point of view also, the question of motive is of special importance. Take the example of General Dyer. He resorted to firing and killed hundreds of innocent and unarmed people. But the military court did not order him to be shot. It gave him lakhs of rupees as award. Take another example. Shri Kharag Bahadur Singh, a young Gurkha, killed a Marwari in Calcutta. If the motive be set aside, then Kharag Bahadur Singh ought to have been hanged. But he was awarded a mild sentence of a few years only. He was even released much before the expiry of his sentence. Was there any loophole in the law that he escaped capital punishment? Or, was the charge of murder not proved against him? Like us, he also accepted the full responsibility of his action, but he escaped death. He is free today. I ask Your Lordship, why was he not awarded capital punishment? His action was well calculated and well planned. From the motive end, his action was more serious and fatal than ours. He was awarded a mild punishment because his intentions were good. He saved the society from a dirty leach who had sucked the life-blood of so many pretty young girls. Kharag Singh was given a mild punishment just to uphold the formalities of the law.

This principle (*that the law does not take motive into consideration*—ed.) is quite absurd. This is against the basic principles of the law which declares that "the law is for man and not man for the law". As such, why the same norms are not being applied to us also? It is quite clear that while convicting Kharag Singh his motive was kept in mind, otherwise a murderer

can never escape the hangman's noose. Are we being deprived of the ordinary advantage of the law because our offence is against the government, or because our action has a political importance?

My Lords, under these circumstances, please permit us to assert that a government which seeks shelter behind such mean methods has no right to exist. If it is exists, it is for the time being only, and that too with the blood of thousands of people on its head. If the law does not see the motive, there can be no justice, nor can there be stable peace.

Mixing of arsenic (poison) in the flour will not be considered to be a crime, provided its purpose is to kill rats. But if the purpose is to kill a man, it becomes a crime of murder. Therefore, such laws which do not stand the test of reason and which are against the principles of justice, should be abolished. Because of such unjust laws, many great intellectuals had to adopt the path of revolt.

The facts regarding our case are very simple. We threw two bombs in the legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929. As a result of the explosion, a few persons received minor scratches. There was pandemonium in the chamber, hundreds of visitors and members of the Assembly ran out. Only my friend B.K. Dutt and myself remained seated in the visitors gallery and offered ourselves for arrest. We were tried for attempt to murder, and convicted for life. As mentioned above, as a result of the bomb explosion, only four or five persons were slightly injured and one bench got damaged. We offered ourselves for arrest without any resistance. The Sessions Judge admitted that we could have very easily escaped, had we had any intention like that. We accepted our offence and gave a statement explaining our position. We are not afraid of punishment. But we do not want that we should be wrongly understood. The judge removed a few paragraphs from our statement. This we consider to be harmful for our real position.

A proper study of the full text of our statement will make it clear that, according to us, our country is passing through a delicate phase. We saw the coming catastrophe and thought it proper to give a timely warning with a loud voice, and we gave the warning in the manner we thought proper. We may be wrong. Our line of thinking and that of the learned judge may be different, but that does not mean that we be deprived of the permission to express our ideas, and wrong things be propagated in our name.

In our statement we explained in detail what we mean by "Long Live Revolution" and "Down With Imperialism". That formed the crux of our ideas. That portion was removed from our statement. Generally a wrong meaning is attributed to the word revolution. That is not our understanding. Bombs and pistols do not make revolution. The sword of revolution is sharpened on the whetting-stone of ideas. This is what we wanted to emphasise. By revolution we mean the end of the miseries of capitalist wars. It was not proper to pronounce judgement without understanding our aims and objects and the process of achieving them. To associate wrong ideas with our names is out and out injustice.

It was very necessary to give the timely warning that the unrest of the people is increasing and that the malady may take a serious turn, if not treated in time and properly. If our warning is not heeded, no human power will be able to stop it. We took this step to give proper direction to the storm. We are serious students of history. We believe that, had the ruling powers acted correctly at the proper time, there would have been no bloody revolutions in France and Russia. Several big powers of the world tried to check the storm of ideas and were sunk in the atmosphere of bloodshed. The ruling people cannot change the flow of the current. We wanted to give the first warning. Had we aimed at killing some important personalities, we would have failed in

the attainment of our aim.

My Lords, this was the aim and the spirit behind our action, and the result of the action corroborates our statement. There is one more point which needs elucidation, and that is regarding the strength of the bombs. Had we had no idea of the strength of the bombs, there would have been no question of our throwing them in the presence of our respected national leader like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Shri Kelkar, Shri Jayaker and Shri Jinnah. How could we have risked the lives of our leaders? After all we are not mad and, had we been so, we would have certainly been sent to the lunatic asylum, instead of being put in jail. We had full knowledge about the strength of the bombs and that is why we acted with so much confidence. It was very easy to have thrown the bombs on the occupied benches, but it was difficult to have thrown them on unoccupied seats. Had we not of saner mind or had we been mentally unbalanced, the bombs would have fallen on occupied benches and not in empty places. Therefore I would say that we should be rewarded for the courage we showed in carefully selecting the empty places. Under these conditions, My Lords, we think we have not been understood properly. We have not come before you to get our sentences reduced. We have come here to clarify our position. We want that we should not be given any unjust treatment, nor should any unjust opinion be pronounced about us. The question of punishment is of secondary importance before us.

Reasons for Boycott of the Court Proceedings

The Second Lahore Conspiracy Case accused boycotted the court proceedings in 1930 because they were not given adequate facilities to defend their case. In this statement, they explained the reasons for refusing to attend the court so that their stand was not misrepresented and misunderstood.

Mister Magistrate,

After going through your order dated 4 February, 1930, which was published in *The Civil and Military Gazette*, it appears necessary that we explain to you the reason of our boycott of the court.

It is wrong to say that we have boycotted the courts of the British government. Today, we are going to the court of Mr. Louis who is hearing the case initiated against us under Section 22 of the Jail Act. We had presented our problems and difficulties in our bail application before you, but it still remains unconsidered.

Our comrades under trial belong to different and distant corners of the country. Therefore, they should be given the facility of meeting their wellwishers and sympathisers. Shri B.K. Dutt gave an application to meet Miss Lajjawati, and Shri Kamal Nath Tewari also wanted to meet someone, but they were denied the meeting on the ground that both were neither their relatives nor their lawyers. Even after securing their authorisation, they were not allowed to meet. It is quite clear from this that the undertrials are not given the facilities for their defence. Not merely this, Comrade Kranti Kumar, who was doing very useful

work for our defence committee and was also providing us with things of daily use, has been imprisoned on a fabricated charge. It has come to our knowledge that when the fabricated charge of bringing bullets in the sauce, could not be proved against him, another case has been fabricated against him under Section 124 A in Gurudaspur which is distant from Lahore.

I myself cannot keep a wholetime lawyer; therefore I wanted that my trusted friends should observe the court proceedings by being present there, but they were denied permission without any explicit reason, and only Lala Amardas, Advocate, has been given a seat.

We can never like this drama acted in the name of justice, because we do not get any facility or benefit for defending ourselves. One more serious complaint is against non-availability of newspapers. Undertrial prisoners cannot be treated like convicted prisoners. We should be given at least one newspaper regularly. We want one newspaper also for those who do not know English. Therefore, as a protest, we are returning even the English daily *Tribune*. We decided to boycott the court on 29 January, 1930, because of these complaints. We will rejoin the proceedings when these inconveniences are removed.

Yours

etc. etc.

Message to Punjab Students' Conference

Alongwith Batukeshwar Dutt, Bhagat Singh sent a message to the delegates of the Second Punjab Students' Conference held at Lahore in 1929 and presided over by Subhash Chandra Bose. It asked students to spread the message of revolution to every part of the country.

Comrades

Today, we cannot ask the youth to take to pistols and bombs. Today, students are confronted with a far more important assignment. In the coming Lahore Session the Congress is to give call for a fierce fight for the independence of the country. The youth will have to bear a great burden in this difficult times in the history of the nation. It is true that students have faced death at the forward positions of the struggle for independence. Will they hesitate this time in proving their same staunchness and self-confidence ? The youth will have to spread this revolutionary message to the far corners of the country. They have to awaken crores of slum-dwellers of the industrial areas and villagers living in worn-out cottages, so that we will be independent and the exploitation of man by man will become an impossibility. Punjab is considered politically backward even otherwise. This is also the responsibility of the youth. Taking inspiration from the martyr Yatindra Nath Das and with boundless reverence for the country, they must prove that they can fight with steadfast resolve in this struggle for independence.

Message to Young Political Workers

Addressed to young political workers, this document was written in February 1931. Bhagat Singh encouraged young people to work among workers and peasants and follow Marxist ideology. This message sent just a few days before his execution is an expression of his unequivocal commitment to the cause of revolution and socialism.

To

The Young Political Workers

Dear Comrades,

Our movement is passing through a very important phase at present. After a year's fierce struggle some definite proposals regarding the constitutional reforms have been formulated by the Round Table Conference and the Congress leaders have been invited to give this* . . . think it desirable in the present circumstances to call off their movement. Whether they decide in favour or against is a matter of little importance to us. The present movement is bound to end in some sort of compromise. The compromise may be effected sooner or later. And compromise is not such ignoble and deplorable a thing as we generally think. It is rather an indispensable factor in the political strategy. Any nation that rises against the oppressors is bound to fail in the beginning, and to gain partial reforms during the medieval period of its struggle through compromises. And it is only at the last stage—having fully organised all the forces and

* Some words are missing here.

resources of the nation—that it can possibly strike the final blow in which it might succeed to shatter the ruler's government. But even then it might fail, which makes some sort of compromise inevitable. This can be best illustrated by the Russian example.

In 1905 a revolutionary movement broke out in Russia. All the leaders were very hopeful. Lenin had returned from the foreign countries where he had taken refuge. He was conducting the struggle. People came to tell him that a dozen landlords were killed and a score of their mansions were burnt. Lenin responded by telling them to return and to kill twelve hundred landlords and burn as many of their palaces. In his opinion that would have meant something if revolution failed. Duma was introduced. The same Lenin advocated the view of participating in the Duma. This is what happened in 1907. In 1906 he was opposed to the participation in this first Duma which had granted more scope of work than this second one whose rights had been curtailed. This was due to the changed circumstances. Reaction was gaining the upper hand and Lenin wanted to use the floor of the Duma as a platform to discuss socialist ideas.

Again after the 1917 revolution, when the Bolsheviks were forced to sign the Brest Litovsk Treaty, everyone except Lenin was opposed to it. But Lenin said: "Peace". "Peace and again peace: peace at any cost—even at the cost of many of the Russian provinces to be yielded to German War Lord". When some anti-Bolshevik people condemned Lenin for this treaty, he declared frankly that the Bolsheviks were not in a position to face the German onslaught and they preferred the treaty to the complete annihilation of the Bolshevik Government.

The thing that I wanted to point out was that compromise is an essential weapon which has to be wielded every now and then as the struggle develops. But the thing that we must keep always before us is the idea of the movement. We must always

maintain a clear notion as to the aim for the achievement of which we are fighting. That helps us to verify the success and failures of our movements and we can easily formulate the future programme. Tilak's policy, quite apart from the ideal, i.e. his strategy, was the best. You are fighting to get sixteen annas from your enemy, you get only one anna. Pocket it and fight for the rest. What we note in the moderates is of their ideal. They start to achieve one anna and they can't get it. The revolutionaries must always keep in mind that they are striving for a complete revolution. Complete mastery of power in their hands. Compromises are dreaded because the conservatives try to disband the revolutionary forces after the compromise. But able and bold revolutionary leaders can save the movement from such pitfalls. We must be very careful at such junctures to avoid any sort of confusion of the real issues, especially the goal. The British Labour leaders betrayed their real struggle and have been reduced to mere hypocrite imperialists. In my opinion the diehard conservatives are better to us than these polished imperialist Labour leaders. About the tactics and strategy one should study life-work of Lenin. His definite views on the subject of compromise will be found in *"Left-Wing" Communism*.

I have said that the present movement, i.e., the present struggle, is bound to end in some sort of compromise or complete failure.

I said that, because in my opinion, this time the real revolutionary forces have not been invited into the arena. This is a struggle dependent upon the middle class shopkeepers and a few capitalists. Both these, and particularly the latter, can never dare to risk its property or possessions in any struggle. The real revolutionary armies are in the villages and in factories, the peasantry and the labourers. But our bourgeois leaders do not and cannot dare to tackle them. The sleeping lion once awakened from its slumber shall become irresistible even after the

achievement of what our leaders aim at. After his first experience with the Ahmedabad labourers in 1920 Mahatma Gandhi declared: "We must not tamper with the labourers. It is dangerous to make political use of the factory proletariat" (*The Times*, May 1921). Since then, they never dared to approach them. There remains the peasantry. The Bardoli resolution of 1922 clearly defines the horror the leaders felt when they saw the gigantic peasant class rising to shake off not only the domination of an alien nation but also the yoke of the landlords.

It is there that our leaders prefer a surrender to the British than to the peasantry. Leave alone Pt. Jawaharlal. Can you point out any leader who made any effort to organise the peasants or the labourers? No, they will not run the risk. There they lack. That is why I say they never meant a complete revolution. Through economic and administrative pressure they hoped to get a few more reforms, a few more concessions for the Indian capitalists. That is why I say that this movement is doomed to die, may be after some sort of compromise or even without. The young workers who in all sincerity raise the cry "Long Live Revolution", are not well organised and strong enough to carry the movement themselves. As a matter of fact, even our great leaders, with the exception of perhaps Pt. Motilal Nehru, do not dare to take any responsibility on their shoulders, that is why every now and then they surrender unconditionally before Gandhi. In spite of their differences, they never oppose him seriously and the resolutions have to be carried for the Mahatma.

In these circumstances, let me warn the sincere young workers who seriously mean a revolution, that harder times are coming. Let them beware lest they should get confused or disheartened. After the experience made through two struggles of the Great Gandhi, we are in a better position to form a clear idea of our present position and the future programme.

Now allow me to state the case in the simplest manner.

You cry "Long Live Revolution." Let me assume that you really mean it. According to our definition of the term, as stated in our statement in the Assembly Bomb Case, revolution means the complete overthrow of the existing social order and its replacement with the socialist order. For that purpose our immediate aim is the achievement of power. As a matter of fact, the state, the government machinery is just a weapon in the hands of the ruling class to further and safeguard its interest. We want to snatch and handle it to utilise it for the consummation of our ideal, i.e., social reconstruction on new, i.e., Marxist, basis. For this purpose we are fighting to handle the government machinery. All along we have to educate the masses and to create a favourable atmosphere for our social programme. In the struggles we can best train and educate them.

With these things clear before us, i.e., our immediate and ultimate object having been clearly put, we can now proceed with the examination of the present situation. We must always be very candid and quite business-like while analysing any situation.

We know that since a hue and cry was raised about the Indians' participation in and share in the responsibility of the Indian government, the Minto-Morley Reforms were introduced, which formed the Viceroy's council with consultation rights only. During the Great War, when the Indian help was needed the most, promises about self-government were made and the existing reforms were introduced. Limited legislative powers have been entrusted to the Assembly but subject to the goodwill of the Viceroy. *Now is the third stage.*

Now reforms are being discussed and are to be introduced in the near future. How can our young men judge them? This is a question; I do not know by what standard are the Congress leaders going to judge them. But, for us, the revolutionaries, we can have the following criteria:

1. Extent of responsibility transferred to the shoulders of the Indians.
2. Form of the Government institutions that are going to be introduced and the extent of the right of participation given to the masses.
3. Future prospects and the safeguards.

These might require a little further elucidation. In the first place, we can easily judge the extent of responsibility given to our people by the control our representatives will have on the executive. Up till now, the executive was never made responsible to the Legislative Assembly and the Viceroy had the veto power, which rendered all the efforts of the elected members futile. Thanks to the efforts of the Swaraj Party, the Viceroy was forced every now and then to use these extraordinary powers to shamelessly trample the solemn decisions of the national representatives under foot. It is already too well known to need further discussion.

Now in the first place we must see the method of the executive formation: Whether the executive is to be elected by the members of a popular assembly or is to be imposed from above as before, and further, whether it shall be responsible to the house or shall absolutely affront it as in the past?

As regards the second item, we can judge it through the scope of franchise. The property qualifications making a man eligible to vote should be altogether abolished and universal suffrage be introduced instead. Every adult, both male and female, should have the right to vote. At present we can simply see how far the franchise has been extended.

As for the form, we have the bicameral government. In my opinion, the upper house is much a bourgeois superstition or trap. According to me unicameral government is the only best we can expect.

I may here make a mention about provincial autonomy. But from whatever I have heard, I can only say that the Governor imposed from above, equipped with extraordinary powers, higher and above the legislative, shall prove to be no less than a despot. Let us better call it the "provincial tyranny" instead of "autonomy." This is a strange type of democratisation of the state institutions.

The third item is quite clear. During the last two years the British politicians have been trying to undo Montague's promise for another dole of reforms to be bestowed every ten years till the British Treasury exhausts.

We can see what they have decided about the future.

Let me make it clear that we do not analyse these things to rejoice over the achievement, but to form a clear idea about our situation, so that we may enlighten the masses and prepare them for further struggle. For us, compromise never means surrender, but a step forward and some rest. That is all and nothing else.

* * *

Having discussed the present situation, let us proceed to discuss the future programme and the line of action we ought to adopt.

As I have already stated, for any revolutionary party a definite programme is very essential. For, you must know that revolution means action. It means a change brought about deliberately by an organised and systematic work, as opposed to sudden and unorganised or spontaneous change or breakdown. And for the formulation of a programme, one must necessarily study:

1. The goal.
2. The premises from where we are to start, i.e., the existing conditions.
3. The course of action, i.e., means and methods.

Unless one has a clear notion about these three factors, one cannot discuss anything about programme.

We have discussed the present situation to some extent. The goal also has been slightly touched. We want a socialist revolution, the indispensable preliminary to which is the political revolution. That is what we want. The political revolution does not mean the transfer of state (or more crudely, the power) from the hands of the British to the Indian, but to those Indians who are at one with us as to the final goal, or to be more precise, the power to be transferred to the revolutionary party through popular support. After that, to proceed in right earnest is to organise the reconstruction of the whole society on the socialist basis. If you do not mean this revolution, then please have mercy. Stop shouting "Long Live Revolution." The term revolution is too sacred, at least to us, to be so lightly used or misused. But if you say you are for the national revolution and the aims of your struggle is an Indian republic of the type of the United States of America, then I ask you to please let me know on what forces you rely that will help you bring about that revolution. The only forces on which you can rely to bring about any revolution, whether national or the socialist, are the peasantry and the labour. Congress leaders do not dare to organise those forces. You have seen it in this movement. They know it better than anybody else that without these forces they are absolutely helpless. When they passed the resolution of complete independence—that really meant a revolution—they did not mean it. They had to do it under pressure of the younger element, and then they wanted to use it as a threat to achieve their hearts' desire—Dominion Status. You can easily judge it by studying the resolutions of the last three sessions of the Congress. I mean Madras, Calcutta and Lahore. At Calcutta, they passed a resolution asking for Dominion Status within twelve months, otherwise they would be forced to adopt complete independence

as their object, and in all solemnity waited for some such gift till midnight after the 31st December, 1929. Then they found themselves "honour bound" to adopt the Independence resolution, otherwise they did not mean it. But even then Mahatmaji made no secret of the fact that the door (for compromise) was open. That was the real spirit. At the very outset they knew that their movement could not but end in some compromise. It is this half-heartedness that we hate, not the compromise at a particular stage in the struggle. Anyway, we were discussing the forces on which you can depend for a revolution. But if you say that you will approach the peasants and labourers to enlist their active support, let me tell you that they are not going to be fooled by any sentimental talk. They ask you quite candidly: what are they going to gain by your revolution for which you demand their sacrifices, what difference does it make to them whether Lord Reading is the head of the Indian government or Sir Purshotamdas Thakordas? What difference for a peasant if Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru replaces Lord Irwin! It is useless to appeal to his national sentiment. You can't "use" him for your purpose; you shall have to mean seriously and to make him understand that the revolution is going to be his and for his good. The revolution of the proletariat and for the proletariat.

When you have formulated this clear-cut idea about your goals you can proceed in right earnest to organise your forces for such an action. Now there are two different phases through which you shall have to pass. First, the preparation; second, the action.

After the present movement ends, you will find disgust and some disappointment amongst the sincere revolutionary workers. But you need not worry. Leave sentimentalism aside. Be prepared to face the facts. Revolution is a very difficult task. It is beyond the power of any man to make a revolution. Neither

can it be brought about on any appointed date. It is brought about by special environments, social and economic. The function of an organised party is to utilise such an opportunity offered by these circumstances. And to prepare the masses and organise the forces for the revolution is a very difficult task. And that required a very great sacrifice on the part of the revolutionary workers. Let me make it clear that if you are a businessman or an established worldly or family man, please don't play with fire. As a leader you are of no use to the party. We have already very many such leaders who spare some evening hours for delivering speeches. They are useless. We require—to use the term so dear to Lenin—the "professional revolutionaries". The whole-time workers who have no other ambitions or life-work except the revolution. The greater the number of such workers organised into a party, the great the chances of your success.

To proceed systematically, what you need the most is a party with workers of the type discussed above with clear-cut ideas and keen perception and ability of initiative and quick decisions. The party shall have iron discipline and it need not necessarily be an underground party, rather the contrary. Though the policy of voluntarily going to jail should altogether be abandoned. That will create a number of workers who shall be forced to lead an underground life. They should carry on the work with the same zeal. And it is this group of workers that shall produce worthy leaders for the real opportunity.

The party requires workers which can be recruited only through the youth movement. Hence we find the youth movement as the starting point of our programme. The youth movement should organise study circles, class lectures and publication of leaflets, pamphlets, books and periodicals. This is the best recruiting and training ground for political workers.

Those young men who may have matured their ideas and

may find themselves ready to devote their life to the cause, may be transferred to the party. The party workers shall always guide and control the work of the youth movement as well. The party should start with the work of mass propaganda. It is very essential. One of the fundamental causes of the failure of the efforts of the Ghadar Party (1914-15) was the ignorance, apathy and sometimes active opposition of the masses. And apart from that, it is essential for gaining the active sympathy of and organising the peasants and workers. The name of party or rather,* . . . a communist party. This party of political workers, bound by strict discipline, should handle all other movements. It shall have to organise the peasants' and workers' parties, labour unions, and may even venture to capture the Congress and kindred political bodies. And in order to create political consciousness, not only of national politics but class politics as well, the party should organise a big publishing campaign. Subjects on all proletens (!) enlightening the masses of the socialist theory shall be within easy reach and distributed widely. The writings should be simple and clear.

There are certain people in the labour movement who enlist some absurd ideas about the economic liberty of the peasants and workers without political freedom. They are demagogues or muddle-headed people. Such ideas are unimaginable and preposterous. We mean the economic liberty of the masses, and for that very purpose we are striving to win the political power. No doubt in the beginning, we shall have to fight for little economic demands and privileges of these classes. But these struggles are the best means for educating them for a final struggle to conquer political power.

Apart from these, there shall necessarily be organised a military department. This is very important. At times its need

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* A few words are missing here.

is felt very badly. But at that time you cannot start and formulate such a group with substantial means to act effectively. Perhaps this is the topic that needs a careful explanation. There is very great probability of my being misunderstood on this subject. Apparently I have acted like a terrorist. But I am not a terrorist. I am a revolutionary who has got such definite ideas of a lengthy programme as is being discussed here. My "comrades in arms" might accuse me, like Ram Prasad Bismil, for having been subjected to certain sort of reaction in the condemned cell, which is not true. I have got the same ideas, same convictions, same zeal and same spirit as I used to have outside, perhaps—nay, decidedly—better. Hence I warn my readers to be careful while reading my words. They should not try to read anything between the lines. Let me announce with all the strength at my command, that I am not a terrorist and I never was, except perhaps in the beginning of my revolutionary career. And I am convinced that we cannot gain anything through those methods. One can easily judge it from the history of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. All our activities were directed towards an aim, i.e., identifying ourselves with the great movement as its military wing. If anybody has misunderstood me, let him amend his ideas. I do not mean that bombs and pistols are useless, rather the contrary. But I mean to say that mere bomb-throwing is not only useless but sometimes harmful. The military department of the party should always keep ready all the war-material it can command for any emergency. It should back the political work of the party. It cannot and should not work independently.

On these lines indicated above, the party should proceed with its work. Through periodical meetings and conferences they should go on educating and enlightening their workers on all topics.

If you start the work on these lines, you shall have to be very sober. The programme requires at least twenty years for its fulfilment. Cast aside the youthful dreams of a revolution within ten years of Gandhi's utopian promises of Swaraj in One Year. It requires neither the emotion nor the death, but the life of constant struggle, suffering and sacrifice. Crush your individuality first. Shake off the dreams of personal comfort. Then start to work. Inch by inch you shall have to proceed. It needs courage, perseverance and very strong determination. No difficulties and no hardships shall discourage you. No failure and betrayals shall dishearten you. No travails (!) imposed upon you shall snuff out the revolutionary will in you. Through the ordeal of sufferings and sacrifice you shall come out victorious. And these individual victories shall be the valuable assets of the revolution.

Long Live The Revolution

2nd February, 1931

Why I Am An Atheist

When asked by an old prisoner to take to religion and on his refusal to do so, taunted by him further, that when his end is near he will he will do so, Bhagat Singh decided to put down his ideas on religion on paper. He then, near the end of his life, wrote the pamphlet 'Why I am An Atheist'. He smuggled it to his father who published it in June 1931 in his weekly, *The People*, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai.

A new question has cropped up. Is it due to vanity that I do not believe in the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God? I had never imagined that I would ever have to confront such a question. But conversation with some friends has given me, a hint that certain of my friends, if I am not claiming too much in thinking them to be so—are inclined to conclude from the brief contact they have had with me, that it was too much on my part to deny the existence of God and that there was a certain amount of vanity that actuated my disbelief. Well, the problem is a serious one. I do not boast to be quite above these human traits. I am a man and nothing more. None can claim to be more. I also have this weakness in me. Vanity does form a part of my nature. Amongst my comrades I was called an autocrat. Even my friend Mr. B.K. Dutt sometimes called me so. On certain occasions I was decried as a despot. Some friends do complain and very seriously too that I involuntarily thrust my opinions upon others and get my proposals accepted. That this is true up to a certain extent, I do not deny. This may amount to egotism. There is vanity in me

in as much as our cult as opposed to other popular creeds is concerned. But that is not personal. It may be, it is only legitimate pride in our cult and does not amount to vanity. Vanity or to be more precise "Ahankar" is the excess of undue pride in one's self. Whether it is such an undue pride that has led me to atheism or whether it is after very careful study of the subject and after much consideration that I have come to disbelieve in God, is a question that I, intend to discuss here. Let me first make it clear that egotism and vanity are two different things.

In the first place, I have altogether failed to comprehend as to how undue pride or vaingloriousness could ever stand in the way of a man in believing in God. I can refuse to recognize the greatness of a really great man provided I have also achieved a certain amount of popularity without deserving it or without having possessed the qualities really essential or indispensible for the same purpose. That much is conceivable. But in what way can a man believing in God cease believing due to his personal vanity? There are only two Ways. The man should either begin to think himself a rival of God or he may begin to believe himself to be God. In neither case can he become a genuine atheist. In the first case he does not even deny the existence of his rival. In the second case as well he admits the existence of a conscious being behind the screen guiding all the movements of nature. It is of no importance to us whether he thinks himself to be that supreme being or whether he thinks the supreme conscious being to be somebody apart from himself. The fundamental is there. His belief is there. He is by no means an atheist. Well, here I am. I neither belong to the first category nor to the second. I deny the very existence of that Almighty Supreme Being. Why I deny it shall be dealt with later on. Here I want to clear one thing, that it is not vanity that has actuated me to adopt the doctrines of atheism. I am neither a rival nor

an incarnation nor the Supreme Being Himself. One point is decided, that it is not vanity that has led me to this mode of thinking. Let me examine the facts to disprove this allegation. According to these friends of mine I have grown vainglorious perhaps due to the undue popularity gained during the trials—both Delhi Bomb and Lahore conspiracy cases. Well, let us see if their premises are correct. My atheism is not of so recent origin. I had stopped believing in God when I was an obscure young man, of whose existence my above mentioned friends were not even aware. At least a college student cannot cherish any short of undue pride which may lead him to atheism. Though a favourite with some professors and disliked by certain others, I was never an industrious or a studious boy. I could not get any chance of indulging in such feelings as vanity. I was rather a boy with a very shy nature, who had certain pessimistic dispositions about the future career. And in those days, I was not a perfect atheist. My grand-father under whose influence I was brought up is an orthodox Arya Samajist. An Arya Samajist is anything but an atheist. After finishing my primary education I joined the D.A.V. School of Lahore and stayed in its Boarding House for full one year. There, apart from morning and evening prayers, I used to recite "Gayatri Mantra" for hours and hours. I was a perfect devotee in those days. Later on I began to live with my father. He is a liberal in as much as the orthodoxy of religions is concerned. It was through his teachings that I aspired to devote my life to the cause of freedom. But he is not an atheist. He is a firm believer. He used to encourage me for offering prayers daily. So, this is how I was brought up. In the Non-Co-operation days I joined the National College. It was there that I began to think liberally and discuss and criticise all the religious problems, even about God. But still I was a devout believer. By that time I had begun to preserve the unshorn and unclipped long hair but I could never believe in the mythology

and doctrines of Sikhism or, any other religion. But I had a firm faith in God's existence.

Later on I joined the revolutionary party. The first leader with whom I came in contact, though not convinced, could not dare to deny the existence of God. On my persistent inquiries about God, he used to say, "Pray whenever you want to". Now this is atheism with less courage required for the adoption of that creed. The second leader with whom I came in contact was a firm believer. Let me mention his name—respected comrade Sachindra Nath Sanyal, now undergoing life transportation in connection with the Karachi conspiracy case. From the every first page of his famous and only book, *Bandi Jivan* (or Incarcerated Life), the Glory of God is sung vehemently. In the last page of the second part of that beautiful book his mysticism—because of vedantism—praises showered upon God form a very conspicuous part of his thoughts. "The Revolutionary leaflet" distributed— throughout India on January 28th 1925, was according to the prosecution story the result of his intellectual labour. Now, as is inevitable in the secret work the prominent leader expresses his own views—which are very dear to his person and the rest of the workers have to acquiesce in them—in spite of differences, which they might have. In that leaflet one full paragraph was devoted to praise the Almighty and His rejoicings and doing. That is all mysticism. What I wanted to point out was that the idea of disbelief had not even germinated in the revolutionary party. The famous Kakori martyrs—all four of them—passed their last day in prayers. Ram Prasad Bismil was an orthodox Arya Samajist. Despite his wide studies in the field of Socialism and Communism, Rajen Labiri could not suppress his desire, of reciting hymns of the Upanishads and the Gita. I saw only one man amongst them, who never prayed and used to say, "Philosophy is the outcome of human weakness or limitation

of knowledge". He is also undergoing a sentence of transportation for life. But he also never dared to deny the existence of God.

Up to that period I was only a romantic idealist revolutionary. Uptil then we were to follow. Now came the time to shoulder the whole responsibility. Due to the inevitable reaction, for some time, the very existence of the Party seemed impossible. Enthusiastic comrades—nay leaders—began to jeer at us. For some time I was afraid that some day I also might be convinced of the futility of our own programme. That was a turning point in my revolutionary career. "Study" was the cry that reverberated in the corridors of my mind. Study to enable yourself to face the arguments advanced by opposition. Study to arm yourself with arguments in favour of your cult. I began to study. My previous faith and convictions underwent a remarkable modification. The romance of the violent methods alone which was so prominent amongst our predecessors, was replaced by serious ideas. No more mysticism, no more blind faith. Realism became our cult. Use of force justifiable when resorted to as a matter of terrible necessity: non-violence as policy indispensable for all mass movements. So much about methods. The most important thing was the clear conception of the ideal for which we were to fight, As there were no important activities in the field of action I got ample opportunity to study various ideals of the world revolution. I studied Bakunin, the anarchist leader, something of Marx, the father of Communism and much of Lenin, Trotsky and others, the men who had successfully carried out a revolution in their country. They were all atheists. Bakunin's "God and State", though only fragmentary, is an interesting study of the subject. Later I came across a book entitled *Common Sense* by Nirlamba Swami. It was only a sort of mystic atheism. This subject became of utmost interest to me. By the end of 1926 I had been convinced as to the

baselessness of the theory of existence of an Almighty Supreme Being who created, guided and controlled the universe. I had given out this disbelief of mine. I began discussion on the subjects with my friends. I had become a pronounced atheist. But, what it meant will presently be discussed.

In May 1927 I was arrested at Lahore. The arrest was a surprise. I was quite unaware of the fact that the police wanted me. All of a sudden while passing through a garden I found myself surrounded by police. To my own surprise, I was very calm at that time. I did not feel any sensation, neither did I experience any excitement. I was taken into police custody. Next day I was taken to the Railway Police lock-up where I was to pass one full month. After many day's conversation with the Police officials I guessed that they had some information regarding my connexion with the Kakori Party and my other activities in connection with the revolutionary movement. They told me that I had been to Lucknow while the trial was going on there, that I had negotiated a certain scheme about their rescue, that after obtaining their approval, we had procured some bombs, that by way of test one of the bombs was thrown in the crowd on the occasion of Dussehra 1926. They further informed me, in my interest, that if I could give any statement throwing some light on the activities of the revolutionary party, I was not to be imprisoned but on the contrary set free and rewarded even without being produced as an approver in the Court. I laughed at the proposal. It was all humbug. People holding ideas like ours do not throw bombs on their own innocent people. One fine morning Mr. Newman, the then Senior Superintendent of C.I.D., came to me. And after much sympathetic talk with me imparted the extremely sad news that if I did not give any statement as demanded by them, they would be forced to send me up for trial for conspiracy to wage war in connection with Kakori Case and for brutal murders in

connection with Dussehra Bomb outrage. And he further informed me that they had evidence enough to get me convicted and hanged. In those days I believed—though I was quite innocent—the police could do it if they desired. That very day certain police officials began to persuade me to offer my prayers to God regularly both the times. Now I was an atheist. I wanted to settle for myself whether it was in the days of peace and enjoyment alone that I could boast of being an atheist or whether during such hard times as well I could stick to those principles of mine. After great consideration I decided that I could not lead myself to believe in and pray to God. No, I never did. That was the real test and I came, out successful. Never for a moment did I desire to save my neck at the cost of certain other things. So I was a staunch disbeliever : and have ever since been. It was not an easy job to stand that test. 'Belief' softens the hardships, even can make them pleasant. In God man can find very strong consolation and support. Without Him, man has to depend upon himself. To stand upon one's own legs amid storms and hurricanes is not a child's play. At such testing moments, vanity—if any—evaporates, and man cannot dare to defy the general beliefs, if he does, then we must conclude that he has got certain other strength than mere vanity. This is exactly the situation now. Judgment is already too well known. Within a week it is to be pronounced. What is the consolation with the exception of the idea that I am going to sacrifice my life for a cause ? A God-believing Hindu might be expecting to be reborn as a king, a Muslim or a Christian, might dream of the luxuries to be enjoyed in paradise and the reward he is to get for his sufferings and sacrifices. But what am I to expect? I know the moment the rope is fitted round my neck and rafters removed, from under my feet. That will be the final moment—that will be the last moment. I, or to be more precise, my soul, as interpreted in the metaphysical terminology, shall all be finished

there. Nothing further. A short life of struggle with no such magnificent end, shall in itself be the reward if I have the courage to take it in that light. That is all. With no selfish motive, or desire to be awarded here or hereafter, quite disinterestedly have I devoted my life to the cause of independence, because I could not do otherwise. The day we find a great number of men and women with this psychology who cannot devote themselves to anything else than the service of mankind and emancipation of the suffering humanity; that day shall inaugurate the era of liberty. Not to become a king, nor to gain any other rewards here, or in the next birth or after death in paradise, shall they be inspired to challenge the oppressors, exploiters, and tyrants, but to cast off the yoke of serfdom from the neck of humanity and to establish liberty and peace shall they tread this—to their individual selves perilous and to their noble selves the only glorious imaginable-path. Is the pride in their noble cause to be misinterpreted as vanity? Who dares to utter such an abominable epithet? To him, I say either he is a fool or a knave. Let us forgive him for he can not realize the depth, the emotion, the sentiment and the noble feelings that surge in that heart. His heart is dead as a mere lump of flesh, his eyes are weak, the evils of other interests having been cast over them. Self-reliance is always liable to be interpreted as vanity. It is sad and miserable but there is no help.

You go and oppose the prevailing faith, you go and criticise a hero, a great man, who is generally believed to be above criticism because he is thought to be infallible, the strength of your argument shall force the multitude to decry you as vainglorious. This is due to the mental stagnation. Criticism and independent thinking are the two indispensable qualities of a revolutionary. Because Mahatamaji is great, therefore none should criticise him. Because he has risen above, therefore everything he says—may be in the field of Politics or Religion,

Economics or Ethics—is right. Whether you are convinced or not you must say, "Yes, that's true". This mentality does not lead towards progress. It is rather too obviously, reactionary.

Because our forefathers had set up a faith in some Supreme, Being—the Almighty God— therefore any man who dares to challenge the validity of that faith, or the very existence of that Supreme Being, he shall have to be called an apostate, a renegade. If his arguments are too sound to be refuted by counter-arguments and spirit too strong to be cowed down by the threat of misfortunes that may befall him by the wrath of the Almighty—he shall be decried as vainglorious, his spirit to be denominated as vanity. Then why to waste time in this vain discussion? Why try to argue out the whole thing? This question is coming before the public for the first time, and is being handled in this matter of fact way for the first time, hence this lengthy discussion.

As for the first question, I think I have cleared that it is not vanity that has led me to atheism. My way of argument has proved to be convincing or not, that is to be judged by my readers, not me. I know in the present circumstances, my faith in God would have made my life easier, my burden lighter and my disbelief in Him has turned all the circumstances too dry and the situation may assume too harsh a shape. A little bit of mysticism can make it poetical. But I, do not want the help of any intoxication to meet my fate. I am a realist. I have been trying to overpower the instinct in me by the help of reason. I have not always been successful in achieving this end. But man's duty is to try and endeavour, success depends upon chance and environments.

As for the second question that if it was not vanity, then there ought to be some reason to disbelieve the old and still prevailing faith of the existence of God. Yes. I come to that now. Reason there is. According to me, any man who has got

some reasoning power at his command always tries to reason out his environments. Where direct proofs are lacking philosophy occupies the important place. As I have already stated, a certain revolutionary friend used to say that Philosophy is the outcome of human weakness. When our ancestors had leisure enough to try to solve out the mystery of this world, its past, present and the future, its whys and wherefores, they having been terribly short of direct proofs, everybody tried to solve the problem in his own way. Hence we find the wide differences in the fundamentals of various religious creeds, which some times assume very antagonistic and conflicting shapes. Not only the Oriental and Occidental philosophies differ, there are differences even amongst various schools of thoughts in each hemisphere. Amongst Oriental religions, the Moslem faith is not at all compatible with Hindu faith. In India alone Buddhism and Jainism are sometimes quite separate from Brahmanism, in which there are again conflicting faiths as Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma. Charwak is still another independent thinker of the past ages. He challenged the authority of God in the old times. All these creeds differ from each other on the fundamental question. And everybody considers himself to be on the right. There lies the misfortune. Instead of using the experiments and expressions of the ancient Savants and thinkers as a basis for our future struggle against ignorance and to try to find out a solution to this mysterious problem, we lethargical as we have proved to be raise the hue and cry of faith, unflinching and unwavering faith to their versions and thus are guilty of stagnation in human progress.

Any man who stands for progress has to criticise, disbelieve and challenge every item of the old faith. Item by item he has to reason out every nook and corner of the prevailing faith. If after considerable reasoning one is led to believe in any theory or philosphy, his faith is welcomed. His reasoning can be

mistaken, wrong, misled and sometimes fallacious. But he is liable to correction because reason is the guiding star of his life. But mere faith and blind faith is dangerous: it dulls the brain, and makes a man reactionary. A man who claims to be a realist has to challenge the whole of the ancient faith. If it does not stand the onslaught of reason it crumbles down. Then the first thing for him is to shatter the whole down and clear a space for the erection of a new philosophy. This is the negative side. After it begins the positive work in which, sometimes, some material of the old faith may be used for the purpose of reconstruction. As far as I am concerned, let me admit at the very outset that I have not been able to study much on this point. I had a great desire to study the Oriental Philosophy but I could not get any chance or opportunity to do the same. But so far as the negative study is under discussion, I think I am convinced to the extent of questioning the soundness of the old faith. I have been convinced as to non-existence of a conscious Supreme Being who is guiding and directing the movements of nature. We believe in nature and the whole progressive movement aims at the domination of man over nature for his service. There is no conscious power behind it to direct. This is what our philosophy is.

As for the negative side. we ask a few questions from the 'believers'.

(1) If, as you believe, there is an almighty, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent God—who created the earth or world, please let me know why did he create it ? This world of woes and miseries, a veritable, eternal combination of number less tragedies: Not a single soul being perfectly satisfied.

Pray, don't say that it is His Law: If he is bound by any law, he is not omnipotent. He is another slave like ourselves. Please don't say that it is his enjoyment. Nero burnt one Rome. He killed a very limited number of people. He created very few

tragedies, all to his perfect enjoyment. And what is his place in history ? By what names do the historians mention him? All the venomous epithets are showered upon him. Pages are blackened with invective diatribes condemning Nero, the tyrant, the heartless, the wicked. One Changez Khan sacrificed a few thousand lives to seek pleasure in it and we hate the very name. Then how are you going to justify your almighty, eternal Nero, who has been, and is still causing numberless tragedies every day, every hour and every minute ? How do you think to support his misdoings which surpass those of Changez every single moment? I say why did he create this world—a veritable hell, a place of constant and bitter unrest ? Why did the Almighty create man when he had the power not to do it ? What is the justification for all this ? Do you say to award the innocent sufferers hereafter and to punish the wrong-doers as well? Well, well: How far shall you justify a man who may dare to inflict wounds upon your body to apply a very soft and soothing liniment upon it afterwards? How far the supporters and organisers of the Gladiator Institution were justified in throwing men before the half starved furious lions to be cared for and well looked after if they could survive and could manage to escape death by the wild beasts? That is why I ask, Why did the conscious Supreme Being create this world and man in it? To seek pleasure? Where then is the difference between him and Nero?

You Mohammadens and Christians : Hindu Philosophy shall still linger on to offer another argument. I ask you what is your answer to the above-mentioned question ? You don't believe in previous birth. Like Hindus you cannot advance the argument of previous misdoings of the apparently quite innocent suferers? I ask you why did the omnipotent labour for six days to create the world through word and each day to say that all was well. Call him today. Show him the past history. Make him study the

present situation. Let us see if he dares to say, "All is well",

From the dungeons of prisons, from the stores of starvation consuming millions upon millions of human beings in slums and huts, from the exploited labourers, patiently or say apathetically watching the procedure of their blood being sucked by the Capitalist vampires, and the wastage of human energy that will make a man with the least common sense shiver with horror, and from the preference of throwing the surplus of production in oceans rather than to distribute amongst the needy producers—to the palaces of kings built upon the foundation laid with human bones.... let him see all this and let him say "All is well". Why and wherefore ? That is my question. You are silent. All right then, I proceed. Well, you Hindus, you say all the present sufferers belong to the class of sinners of the previous births. Good. You say the present oppressors were saintly people in their previous births, hence they enjoy power. Let me admit that your ancestors were very shrewed people, they tried to find out theories strong enough to hammer down all the efforts of reason and disbelief. But let us analyse how far this argument can really stand.

From the point of view of the most famous jurists punishment can be justified only from three or four ends to meet which it is inflicted upon the wrongdoer. They are retributive, reformative and deterrent. The retributive theory is now being condemned by all the advanced thinkers. Deterrent theory is also following the same fate. Reformative theory is the only one which is essential, and indispensable for human progress. It aims at returning the offender as a most competent and a peace-loving citizen to the society. But what is the nature of punishment inflicted by God upon men even if we suppose them to be offenders. You say he sends them to be born as a cow, a cat, a tree, a herb or a baest. You enumerate these punishments to be 84 lakhs. I ask you what is its reformative

effect upon man ? How many men have met you who say that they were born as a donkey in previous birth for having committed any sin ? None. Don't quote your Puranas. I have no scope to touch your mythologies. Moreover do you know that the greatest sin in this world is to be poor. Poverty is a sin, it is a punishment. I ask you how far would you appreciate a criminologist, a jurist or a legislator who proposes such measures of punishment which shall inevitably force man to commit more offences ? Had not your God thought of this or he also had to learn these things by experience, but at the cost of untold sufferings to be borne by humanity ? What do you think shall be the fate of a man who has been born in a poor and illiterate family of say a chamar or a sweeper. He is poor, hence he cannot study. He is hated and shunned by his fellow human beings who think themselves to be his superiors having been born in say a higher caste. His ignorance, his poverty and the treatment meted out to him shall harden his heart towards society. Suppose he commits a sin, who shall bear the consequences? God, he or the learned ones of the society ? What about the punishment of those people who were deliberately kept ignorant by the haughty and egotist Brahmans and who had to pay the penalty by bearing the stream of being led (not lead) in their ears for having heard a few sentences of your Sacred Books of learning—the Vedas ? If they committed any offence—who was to be responsible for them and who was to bear the brunt? My dear friends: These theories are the inventions of the privileged ones: They justify their usurped power, riches and superiority by the help of these theories. Yes: It was perhaps Upton Sinclair, who wrote at some place, that just make a man a believer in immortality and then rob him of all his riches, and possessions. He shall help you even in that ungrudgingly. The coalition amongst the religious preachers and possessors of power brought forth jails, gallows, knouts and these theories.

I ask why your omnipotent God, does not stop every man when he is committing any sin or offence ? He can do it quite easily. Why did he not kill war lords or kill the fury of war in them and thus avoid the catastrophe hurled down on the head of humanity by the Great War? Why does he not just produce a certain sentiment in the mind of the British people to liberate India? Why does he not infuse the altruistic enthusiasm in the hearts of all capitalists to forgo their rights of personal possessions of means of production and thus redeem the whole labouring community—nay the whole human society from the bondage of Capitalism. You want to reason out the practicability of socialist theory, I leave it for your almighty to enforce it. People recognize the merits of socialism in as much as the general welfare is concerned. They oppose it under the pretext of its being impracticable. Let the Almighty step in and arrange everything in an orderly fashion. Now don't try to advance round about arguments, they are out of order. Let me tell you, British rule is here not because God wills it but because they possess power and we do not dare to oppose them. Not that it is with the help of God that they are keeping us under their subjection but it is with the help of guns and rifles, bombs and bullets, police and millitia and our apathy that they are successfully committing the most deplorable sin against society— the outrageous exploitation of one nation by another. Where is God ? What is he doing ? Is he enjoying all these woes of human race ? A Nero; a Changez: Down with him.

Do you ask me how I explain the origin of this world and origin of man ? Alright I tell you. Charles Darwin has tried to throw some light on the subject. Study him. Read Soham Swam's *Common Sense*. It shall answer your question to some extent. This is a phenomenon of nature. The accidental mixture of different substances in the shape of nebulae produced this earth. When ? Consult history. The same process produced animals

and in the long run man. Read Darwin's *Origin of Species*. And all the later progress is due to man's constant conflict with nature and his efforts to override it. This is the briefest possible explanation of this phenomenon.

Your other argument may be just to ask why a child is born blind or lame if not due to his deeds committed in the previous birth ? This problem has been explained away by biologists as a mere biological phenomenon. According to them the whole burden rests upon the shoulders of the parents whose deeds, may be conscious or ignorant, previous to the birth of the child, led to its mutilation.

Naturally you may ask another question—though it is quite childish in essence. If no God existed, how did the people come to believe in him? My answer is clear and brief. As they came to believe in ghosts, and evil spirits; the only difference is that belief in God is almost universal and the philosophy well developed. Unlike certain of the radicals I would not attribute its origin to the ingenuity of the exploiters who wanted to keep the people under their subjection by preaching the existence of a Supreme Being and then claiming an authority and sanction from him for their privileged positions. Though I do not differ with them on the essential point that all faiths, religions, creeds and such other institutions became in turn the mere supporters of the tyrannical and exploiting institutions, men and classes. Rebellion against king is always a sin according to every religion.

As regards the origin of God my own idea is that having realised the limitations of man, his weaknesses and shortcomings having been taken into consideration, God was brought into imaginary existence to encourage man to face boldly all the trying circumstances, to meet all dangers manfully and to check and restrain his outbursts in prosperity and affluence. God, both with his private laws and parental generosity was imagined and painted in greater details. He was to serve as a deterrent factor

when his fury and private laws were discussed so that man may not become a danger to society. He was to serve as a father, mother, sister and brother, friend and helper when His parental qualifications were to be explained. So that when man be in great distress having been betrayed and deserted by all friends he may find consolation in the idea that an ever true friend was still there to help him, to support him and that He was Almighty and could do anything. Really that was useful to the society in the primitive age. The idea of God is helpful to man in distress.

Society has to fight out this belief as well as the idol worship and the narrow conception of religion. Similarly, when man tries to stand on his own legs, and become a realist he shall have to throw the faith aside, and to face manfully all the distress, trouble, in which the circumstances may throw him. That is exactly my state of affairs. It is not my vanity, my friends. It is my mode of thinking that has made me an atheist. I don't know whether in my case belief in God and offering of daily prayers which I consider to be most selfish and degraded act on the part of man, whether these prayers can prove to be helpful or they shall make my case worse still. I have read of atheists facing all troubles quite boldly, so am I trying to stand like a man with an erect head to the last; even on the gallows.

Let us see how I carry on : one friend asked me to pray. When informed of my atheism, he said, "During your last days you will begin to believe". I said, No, dear Sir, it shall not be. I will think that to be an act of degradation and demoralization on my part. For selfish motives I am not going to pray. Readers and friends, "Is this vanity"? If it is, I stand for it.

Introduction to the *Dreamland*

Bhagat Singh was asked by an old revolutionary Ram Saran Das to write an introduction to his collection of poems, *Dreamland*. Bhagat Singh did so. This introduction reveals not only the quality of Bhagat Singh's mind, his wide reading, his capacity to understand complex issues and then present them in an easily understandable manner, but also qualities of compassion, respect for old revolutionaries, and the desire and capacity to understand views with which he differed, for example, the views of believers in religion, with whom he differed fundamentally.

My noble friend, L. Ram Saran Das, has asked me to write an introduction to his poetical work, *The Dreamland.* I am neither a poet nor a litterateur, neither am I a journalist nor a critic. Hence, by no stretch of imagination can I find the justification of the demand. But the circumstances in which I am placed do not afford any opportunity of discussing the question with the author arguing back and forth, and thereby do not leave me any alternative but to comply with the desire of my friend.

As I am not a poet I am not going to discuss it from that point of view. I have absolutely no knowledge of meter, and do not even know whether judged from metrical standard it would prove correct. Not being a litteratuer I am not going to discuss it with a view of assigning to it its right place in the national literature.

I, being a political worker, can at the utmost discuss it only from that point of view. But here also one factor is making my work practically impossible or at least very difficult. As a

rule the introduction is always written by a man who is at one with the author on the contents of the work. But, here the case is quite different. I do not see eye to eye with my friend on all the matters. He was aware of the fact that I differed from him on many vital points. Therefore, my writing is not going to be an introduction at all. It can at the utmost amount to a criticism, and its place will be at the end and not in the beginning of the book.

In the political field *The Dreamland* occupies a very important place. In the prevailing circumstance it is filling up a very important gap in the movement. As a matter of fact all the political movements of our country that have hitherto played an important role in our modern history, had been lacking the ideal at the achievement of which they aimed. Revolutionary movement is no exception. In spite of all my efforts, I could not find any revolutionary party that had clear ideas as to what they were fighting for, with the exception of the Ghadar Party which, having been inspired by the USA form of government, clearly stated that they wanted to replace the existing government by a Republican form of government. All other parties consisted of men who had but one idea, i.e., to fight against the alien rulers. That idea is quite laudable but cannot be termed a revolutionary idea. We must make it clear that revolution does not merely mean an upheaval or a sanguinary strife. Revolution necessarily implies the programme of systematic reconstruction of society on new and better adapted basis, after complete destruction of the existing state of affairs (i.e., regime).

In the political field the liberals wanted some reform under the present government, while the extremists demanded a bit more and were prepared to employ radical means for the same purpose. Among the revolutionaries, they had always been in favour of extreme methods with one idea, i.e., of overthrowing the foreign domination. No doubt, there had been some who

were in favour of extorting some reforms through those means. All these movements cannot rightly be designated as revolutionary movements.

But, L. Ram Saran Das is the first revolutionary recruited formally in the Punjab by a Bengali absconder in 1908. Since then he had been in touch with the revolutionary movements and finally joined the Ghadar Party but retaining his old ideas that people held about the ideal of their movement. It has another interesting fact to add to its beauty and value. L. Ram Saran Das was sentenced to death in 1915, and the sentence was later on commuted to life transportation. Today, sitting in the condemned cells myself, I can let the readers know as authoritatively that the life imprisonment is comparatively a far harder lot than that of death. L. Ram Saran Das had actually to undergo fourteen years of imprisonment. It was in some southern jail that he wrote this poetry. The then psychology and mental struggle of the author has stamped its impressions upon the poetry and makes it all the more beautiful and interesting. He had been struggling hard against some depressing mood before he had decided to write. In the days when many of his comrades had been let off on undertakings and the temptation had been very strong for everyone and for him, too, and when the sweet and painful memories of wife and children had added more to the longing for libery, he had to struggle hard against the demoralising effect of these things, and had directed attention to this work. Hence, we find the sudden outburst in the opening paragraph:

"Wife, children, friends that surround me
Were poisonous snakes all around."

He discusses philosophy in the beginning. This philosophy is the backbone of all the revolutionary movements of Bengal as well as of the Punjab. I differ from him on this point very

widely. His interpretation of the universe is teleological and metaphysical; while I am a materialist and my interpretation of the phenomenon would be causal. Nevertheless, it is by no means out of place or out of date. The general ideas that are prevailing in our country, are more in accordance with those expressed by him. To fight that depressing mood he resorted to prayers as is evident that the whole of the beginning of the book is devoted to God, His praise, His definition. Belief in God is the outcome of mysticism which is the natural consequence of depression. That this world is 'Maya' or Mithya', a dream or a fiction, is clear mysticism which has been originated and developed by Hindu sages of old ages, such as Shankaracharya and others. But in the materialist philosophy this mode of thinking has got absolutely no place. But this mysticism of the author is by no means ignoble or deplorable. It has its own beauty and charm. The ideas are encouraging. Just look:

"Be a foundation-stone obscure,
And on thy breast cheerfully bear
The architecture vast and huge,
In suffering find true refuge.
Envy not the plastered top-stone,
On which all worldly praise is thrown." etc., etc.

From my personal experience I can safely assert that in the secret work, when a man constantly leads a risky life, 'without hope and without fear', 'always prepared to die unknown, unhonoured and unsung', then, he cannot but fight the personal temptations and desires by this sort of mysticism which is by no means demoralising. The next thing he deals with is the mentality of a revolutionary. L. Ram Saran Das was the member of the revolutionary party, which was held responsible for many a violent deed. But this by no means proves that revolutionaries are blood-thirsty monsters, seeking pleasure in destruction. Read:

"If need be, outwardly be wild,
But in thy heart be always mild
Hiss if need be, but do not bite,
Love in thy heart and outside fight." etc., etc.

Destruction is not only essential but indispensible for construction. The revolutionaries have to adopt it as a necessary item of their programme, and the philosophy of violence and non-violence is beautifully described in the above lines. Lenin said to Gorky once that he could not hear music, which upset his whole nervous system and used to feel a desire to pat the heads of the artists. "But," added he, "this is not the time to pat the heads. The hands descend now to smash the skulls, though our ultimate aim is the elimination of all sorts of violence." This is truly how the revolutionaries feel when they have to resort to violent means as a terrible necessity.

Next the author deals with the problem concerning the various conflicting religions. He tries to conciliate them just as all the nationalists try to do. His method of dealing with the question is lengthy and round about, though on my part I would have dismissed it with one sentence of Karl Marx that "Religion is opium for the masses."

Lastly comes the most important part of his poetry where he deals with the future society, which we all long to create. But I like to clear one thing at the very outset. *The Dreamland* is a veritable utopia. The author has very candidly admitted it in the title. He does not pretend to have written a scientific thesis on the subject. The title 'Dreamland' makes it clear enough. But utopias play undoubtedly a very important role in social progress. Without St. Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen and their theories there would have been no scientific Marxian socialism. L. Ram Saran Das' utopia occupies the same place. When our work will realise the importance of systematising the

philosophy of their movement and of framing a scientific outlook of the movement, then this book will be very useful to them.

I have marked that the mode of expression is a crude one. The ideas of the existing society have in no way left him untouched while dealing with his utopia.

"Giving of alms to those who need."

In the future society, i.e., the Communist society that we want to build, we are not going to establish charitable institutions, but there shall be no needy and poor, and no alms giving and alms taking. In spite of this discrepancy the question has been dealt with in a very beautiful way.

The general outline discussed by him is the very same as that of the scientific socialism. But there are things which one has to oppose or contradict, or to be more precise, to amend. For instance, in a footnote under stanza 427, he writes that public servants have to work in farms, or say, factories for four hours daily to earn their living. But this is again utopian and impracticable. It is rather the outcome of repulsion of the existing order where the public servants are paid unduly very high. As a matter of fact the Bolshevists even had to recognise that mental work is also as productive a labour as the manual labour. And in the future society when the relations of various elements shall be adjusted on the basis of equality, the producers as well as the distributors shall be considered equally important. You cannot expect a sailor to stop his ship and land every twenty-four hours to do his four hours' daily labour to earn his livelihood; or a scientist to leave his laboratory and his experiment (work) to do his quota in the field. Both of them are doing very productive labour. The only difference that the socialist society expects is that the mental workers shall no longer be regarded superior to the manual workers

L. Ram Saran Das' idea about free education is really worth considering, and the socialist government has adopted somewhat the same course in Russia.

His discussion about crime is really the most advanced school of thought. Crime is the most serious social problem which needs a very tactful treatment. He has been in jail for the better part of his life. He has got the practical experience. At one place he employs the typical jail terms, 'the light labour, the medium labour and the hard labour', etc. Like all other socialists he suggests that, instead of retribution, i.e., retaliation, the reformative theory should form the basis of punishment. Not to punish but to reclaim should be the guiding principle of the administration of justice. Jails should be reformatories and not veritable hells. In this connection the readers should study the Russian prison system.

While dealing with militia he discusses war as well. In my opinion war as an institution shall only occupy a few pages in the Encyclopaedia then, and war materials shall adorn no conflicting or diverse interests that cause war.

At the utmost we can say that war shall have to be retained as an institution for the transitional period. We can easily understand if we take the example of the present-day Russia. There is the dictatorship of the proletariat at present. They want to establish a socialist society. Meanwhile they have to maintain an army to defend themselves against the capitalist society. But the war-aims would be different. Imperialist designs shall no more actuate our dreamland people to wage wars. There shall be no more war trophies. The revolutionary armies shall march to other lands not to rule or loot the people, but to pull the parasitic rulers down from their thrones and stop their blood-sucking exploitation and thus to liberate the toiling masses. But, there shall not be the primitive national or racial hatred to goad our men to fight.

World-federation is the most popular and immediate object of all the free thinking people, and the author has well dilated on the subject, and his criticism of the so-called League of Nations is beautiful.

In a footnote under stanza 571 (572) the author touches, though briefly, the question of methods. He says: "Such a kingdom cannot be brought about by physical violent revolutions. It cannot be forced upon society from without. It must grow from within. . . . This can be brought about by the gradual process of Evolution, by educating the masses on the lines mentioned above", etc. This statement does not in itself contain any discrepancy. It is quite correct, but having not been fully explained, is liable to create some misunderstanding, or worse still, a confusion. Does it mean that L. Ram Saran Das has realised the futility of the cult of force? Has he become an orthodox believer in non-violence? No, it does not mean that.

Let me explain what the above quoted statement amounts to. The revolutionaries know better than anybody else that the socialist society cannot be brought about by violent means, but that it should grow and evolve from within. The author suggests education as the only weapon to be employed. But, everybody can easily realise that the present government here, or, as a matter of fact, all the capitalist governments are not only not going to help any such effort, but on the contrary, suppress it mercilessly. Then, what will his 'evolution' achieve? We the revolutionaries are striving to capture power in our hands and to organize a revolutionary government which should employ all its resources for mass education, as is being done in Russia today. After capturing power, peaceful methods shall be employed for constructive work, force shall be employed to crush the obstacles. If that is what the author means, then we are at one. And I am confident that it is exactly this what he means.

I have discussed the book at great length. I have rather criticised it. But, I am not going to ask any alteration in it, because this has got its historical value. These were the ideas of 1914-15 revolutionaries.

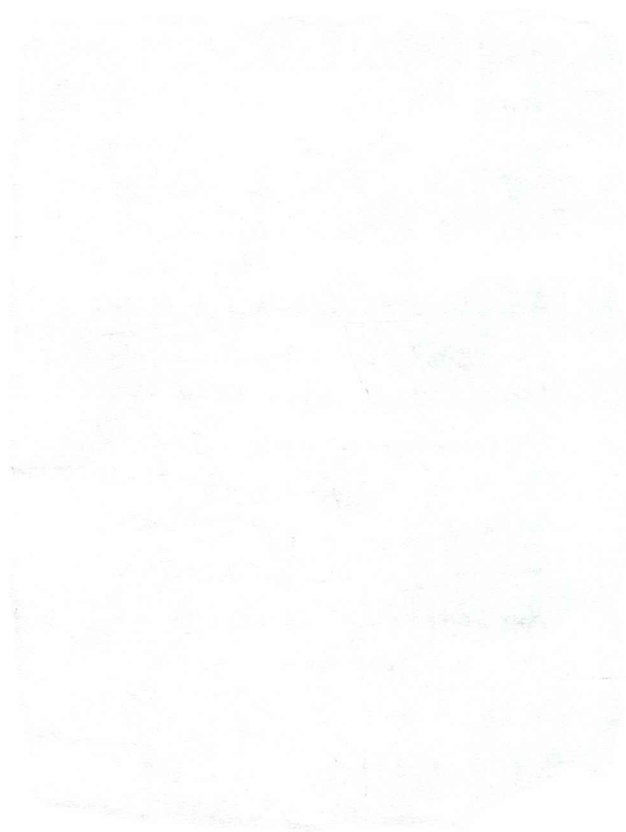
I strongly recommend this book to young men in particular, but with a warning. Please do not read it to follow blindly and take for granted what is written in it. Read it, criticise it, think over it, try to formulate your own ideas with its help.

I have discussed the [illegible] at great length. I have, rather criticised [illegible] that. I am not going to [illegible] in [illegible] [illegible] There [illegible] of [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] ideas [illegible] help

PART–II

LETTERS



Letter to Father*

In 1923, Bhagat singh was studying at the National College, Lahore, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai. He left his home for Kanpur when his father, Kishan Singh, arranged his marriage against his wishes. As he had dedicated his life to the cause of the nation, he forsook physical 'comforts and worldly desires'. This event marked the beginning of his active political life.

Respected father,

Namaste.

My life has already been committed to a noble cause—the cause of freedom of India. For that reason comforts and wordly desires have no attraction in my life.

You must be remembering that at the time of my sacred thread ceremony, when I was quite young, Bapuji** had declared that I was being pledged for the service of the country. I am therefore honouring the pledge of that time. I hope you will excuse me.

Yours obediently
Bhagat Singh

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* Translated from Urdu original.

** Grandfather.

Letter to I.G. (Prisons), Punjab: On the Demand for Better Treatment for Political Prisoners

After Bhagat Singh was transferred from Lahore jail to Mianwali jail in 1929, he addressed this letter to the Inspector General of Prisons, Punjab, asking for his transfer back to Lahore jail. This would enable him to be in touch with his lawyer and relatives and also to prepare and defend his case more effectively.

Mianwali Jail
17 June, 1929

To

The Inspector-General (Jails),
Punjab Jails,
Lahore

Dear Sir,

Despite the fact that I will be prosecuted along with other youngmen arrested in Saunders shooting case, I have been shifted to Mianwali Jail. The hearing of the case is to start from 26 June, 1929. I am totally unable to understand the logic behind this kind of shifting. Whatever it be, justice demands that every undertrial should be given all those facilities which help him to prepare and contest the case. How can I appoint any lawyer while I am here ? It is difficult to keep on the contact with my father and other relatives. This place is quite isolated, the route is troublesome and it is very far from Lahore.

I request you that you order my immediate transfer to Lahore Central Jail so that I get an opportunity to prepare my case. I hope that it will be given the earliest consideration.

Yours
Bhagat Singh

Letter to the Home Members, Government of India: On Hunger-Strikers' Demands for Better Treatment

Making a distinction between political prisoners and criminals and referring to the recommendations of the U.P. Jail Committee Report for better treatment of political prisoners, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt wrote to the Home Member regarding the awful conditions at Mianwali and Lahore jails. They asked for better facilities in jails marking the beginning of their struggle for improvement in the treatment of political prisoners in jails.

Central Jail Lahore
24 June 1929

We, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt, were sentenced to life transportation in the Assembly Bomb Case, Delhi, on the 19th April, 1929. As long as we were undertrial prisoners in Delhi Jail, we were accorded a very good treatment and were given very good diet. But since our transfers from that jail to the Mianwali and Lahore Central Jails respectively, we are being treated as ordinary criminals. On the very first day we wrote an application to the higher authorities asking for better diet and a few other facilities, and refused to take the jail diet.

Our demands were as follows:

1. We, as political prisoners, should be given better diet and the standard of our diet should at least be the same as that of European prisoners. (It is not the sameness of dietary that we demand, but the sameness of standard of diet.)

2. We shall not be forced to do any hard and undignified labour at all.
3. All books, other than those proscribed, alongwith writing materials, should be allowed to us without any restriction.
4. At least one standard daily paper should be supplied to every political prisoner.
5. Political prisoners should have a special ward of their own in every jail, provided with all necessities as those of the Europeans. And all the political prisoners in one jail must be kept together in that ward.
6. Toilet necessities should be supplied.
7. Better clothing.

We have explained above the demands that we made. They are the most reasonable demands. The Jail authorities told us one day that the higher authorities have refused to comply with our demands.

Apart from that, they handle us very roughly while feeding us artificially, and Bhagat Singh was lying quite senseless on the 10th June, 1929, for about 15 minutes, after the forcible feeding, which we request to be stopped without any further delay.

In addition, we may be permitted to refer to the recommendations made in the U.P. Jail Committee by Pt. Jagat Narain and K.B. Hafiz Hidayat Hussain. They have recommended the political prisoners to be treated as "Better Class Prisoners."

We request you to kindly consider our demands at your earliest convenience.

—By "Political Prisoners", we mean all those people who are convicted for offences against the State, for instance the people who were convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Cases, 1915-17, the Kakori Conspiracy Cases and Sedition Cases in general.

Yours
Bhagat Singh
B.K. Dutt

Letter to the Home Members, Government of India: Hunger-Strikers' Demands Reiterated

The Government of India had assured the hunger strikers to implement the recommendations of the jail committee for better treatment of political prisoners. But when it failed to fulfill this promise, Bhagat Singh served an ultimatum to the government on behalf of political prisoners, reiterating to resume their hunger strike.

The Home Member,
The Govt. of India, Delhi.
Through
The Special Magistrate,
Lahore Conspiracy Case, Lahore.

Sir,

With reference to our telegram dated 20th Jan. 1930, reading as follows, we have not been given any reply.

Home Member, India Government. Delhi. Undertrials, Lahore Conspiracy Case and other political prisoners suspended hunger-strike on the assurance that the India Govt. was considering Provincial Jail Committee's reports. All India Government Conference over. No action yet taken. As vindictive treatment to political prisoners still continues, we request, we be informed within a week final Govt. decision. Lahore Conspiracy Case undertrials.

As briefly stated in the above telegram, we beg to bring to your kind notice that the Lahore Conspiracy Case undertrials

and several other political prisoners confined in Punjab jails suspended hunger strike on the assurance given by the members of the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee that the question of the treatment of political prisoners was going to be finally settled to our satisfaction within a very short period. Further, after the death of our great martyr Jatindra Nath Das, the matter was taken up in the Legislative Assembly and the same assurance was given publicly by Sir James Crerar. It was then pronounced that there has been a change of heart and the question of the treatment of political prisoners was receiving the utmost sympathy of the government. Such political prisoners who were still on hunger strike in jails at different parts of the country then suspended their hunger strike on the request being made to this effect in an AICC resolution passed in view of the said assurance and the critical condition of some of the prisoners.

Since then all the local governments have submitted their reports. A meeting of Inspectors- General of Prisons of different provinces has been held at Lucknow and the deliberations of the All-India Govt. Conference have been concluded at Delhi. The All-India Conference was held in the month of Dec. last. Over one month has passed by and still the Government of India has not carried into effect any final recommendations. By such dilatory attitude of the government we no less than the general public have begun to fear that perhaps the question has been shelved. Our apprehensions have been strengthened by the vindictive treatment meted out to hunger strikers and other political prisoners during the last four months. It is very difficult for us to know the details of the hardships to which the political prisoners are being subjected. Still the little information that has trickled out of the four walls of the jails is sufficient to furnish us with glaring instances. We give below a few such instances which we cannot but feel, are not in conformity with the govt. assurance.

(1) Sj. B.K. Banerji, undergoing 5 years imprisonment in connection with Dakshineshwar Bomb Case in Lahore Central Jail, joined the hunger strike last year. Now as a punishment for the same, for each day of his period of hunger strike, two days of the remission so far earned by him have been forfeited. Under usual circumstances his release was due in Dec. last, but it will be delayed by full four months. In the same Jail similar punishment has been awarded to Baba Sohan Singh, an old man of about seventy, now undergoing his sentence of life transportation in connection with the (first) Lahore Conspiracy Case. Besides, among others, Sardar Gopal Singh confined in Mianwali Jail, Master Mota Singh confined in Rawalpindi Jail have also been awarded vindictive punishments for joining the general hunger strike. In most of these cases the periods of imprisonment have been enhanced while some of them have been removed from the Special class.

(2) For the same offence, i.e., joining the general hunger strike, Messrs. Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Ram Kishan Khattri and Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya, confined in Agra Central Jail, Raj Kumar Sinha, Sachindra Nath Bukshi, Manmath Nath Gupta and several other Kakori case prisoners have been severely punished. It is reliably learnt that Mr. Sanyal was given bar-fetters and solitary cell-confinement and as a consequence there has been a break-down in his health. His weight has gone down by eighteen pounds. Mr. Bhattacharya is reported to be suffering from tuberculosis. The three Bareilly Jail prisoners also have been punished. It is learnt that all their privileges have been withdrawn. Even their usual rights of interviewing and communications with relatives were forfeited. They have all been considerably reduced in their weights. Two press statements have been issued in this connection in Sep. 1929 and Jan. 1930 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

(3) After the passing of the AICC resolution regarding hunger strike, the copies of the same, which were sent to different political prisoners, were withheld by the jail authorities. Further, the Govt. refused a Congress deputation to meet the prisoners in this respect.

(4) The Lahore Conspiracy Case undertrials were assaulted brutally on 23rd and 24th Oct., 1929, by orders of high police officials. Full details have appeared in the press. The copy of the statement of one of us recorded by the Special Magistrate, Pt. Shri Krishan, has been duly forwarded to you in a communication dated 16th Dec., 1929. Neither the Punjab Government nor the Govt. of India felt it necessary to reply or even acknowledge receipt of our communication praying for an enquiry. While, on the other hand, local government has felt the imperative necessity of prosecuting us in connection with the very same incident for offering "violent resistance".

(5) In the last week of Dec. 1929, Sj. Kiran Chandra Das and eight others confined in the Lahore Borstal Jail, when being taken to and produced in the Magistrate's Court, were found handcuffed and chained together in flagrant breach of the unanimous recommendations of the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee and also of Inspector-General of Prisons, Punjab. It is further noteworthy that these prisoners were undertrials, charged for a bailable offence. A long statement issued by Dr. Mohd. Alam, Lala Duni Chand of Lahore and Lala Duni Chand of Ambala in this connection was published in *Tribune*.

When we learnt these and other sufferings of the political prisoners we refrained from resuming our hunger strike, though we were much grieved as we thought that the matter was going to be finally settled at an early date, but in the light of the above instances, are we now to believe that the untold sufferings of the hunger strikers and the supreme sacrifice made by Jatin Das

have all been in vain? Are we to understand that the Govt. gave its assurance only to check the growing tide of public agitation and to avert a crisis? You will agree with us if we say that we have waited patiently for a sufficiently reasonable period of time. But we cannot wait indefinitely. The government, by its dilatory attitude and the continuation of vindictive treatment to political prisoners, has left us no other option but to resume the struggle. We realise that to go on hunger strike and to carry it on is no easy task. But let us at the same time point out that India can produce many more Jatins and Wagias, Ram Rakshas and Bhan Singhs. (The last two named laid down their lives in the Andamans in 1917—the first breathed his last after 63 days of hunger strike while the other died the death of a great hero after silently undergoing inhuman tortures for full six months.)

Enough has been said by us and the members of the public (inquiry committee) in justification of the better treatment of political prisoners and it is unnecessary here to repeat the same. We would however like to say a few words as regards the inclusion of motive as the basis and the most important factor in the matter of classification. Great fuss has been created on the question of criteria of classification. We find that motive has altogether been excluded so far from the criteria suggested by different provincial governments. This is really a strange attitude. It is through motive alone that the real value of any action can be decided. Are we to understand that the Government is unable to distinguish between a robber who robs and kills his victim and a Kharag Bahadur who kills a villain and saves the honour of a young lady and redeems society of a most licentious parasite? Are both to be treated as two men belonging to the same category? Is there no difference between two men who commit the same offence, one guided buy selfish motive and the other by a selfless one? Similarly, is there no difference between a common murderer and a political worker, even if the latter resorts

to violence? Does not his selflessness elevate his place from amongst those of ordinary criminals? In these circumstances we think that motive should be held as the most important factor in the criteria for classification.

Last year, in the beginning of our hunger strike, when public leaders including Dr. Gopi Chand and Lala Duni Chand of Ambala—the last named being one of the signatories to the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee Report—approached us to discuss the same thing and when they told us that the government considered to treat the political prisoners convicted of offences of violent nature as Special class prisoners, then by way of compromise we agreed to the proposal to the extent of excluding those actually charged with murder. But, later on, the discussion took a different turn and the communique containing the terms of reference for the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee was so worded that the question of motive seemed to be altogether excluded, and the classification was based on two things:

(1) Nature of Offence; and

(2) Social Status of "Offender".

These criteria, instead of solving the problem, made it all the more complicated.

We could understand two classes amongst the political prisoners, those charged for non-violent offences and those charged for violent offences. But then creeps in the question of social status in the report of the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee. As Chaudhary Afzal Haq has pointed out, and rightly too, in his note of dissent to this report, what will be the fate of those political workers who have been reduced to pauper's conditions due to their honorary services in the cause of freedom? Are they to be left at the mercy of a magistrate who will always try to prove the bonafide of his loyalty by classifying everyone as an ordinary convict? Or, is it expected that a non-cooperator will

stretch his hand before the people against whom he is fighting as an opponent, begging for better treatment in jail? Is this the way of removing the causes of dissatisfaction, or rather intensifying them? It might be argued that people living in poverty outside the jails, should not expect luxuries inside the prison when they are detained for the purpose of punishment. But, are the reforms that are demanded, of a nature of luxury? Are they not the bare necessities of life, according to the most moderate standard of living? Inspite of all the facilities that can possibly be demanded, jail will ever remain a jail. The prison in itself does not contain and can never contain any magnetic power to attract the people from outside. Nobody will commit offences simply to come to jail. Moreover, may we venture to say that it is a very poor argument on the part of any government to say that its citizens have been driven to such extreme destitution that their standard of living has fallen even lower than that of jails? Does not such an argument cut at the very root of that government's right of existence? Anyhow, we are not concerned with that at present. What we want to say is that the best way to remove the prevailing dissatisfaction would be to classify the political prisoners as such into a separate class which may further be subdivided, if need be, into two classes—one for those convicted of non-violent offences and the other for persons whose offences include violence. In that case motive will become one of the deciding factors. To say that motive cannot be ascertained in political cases is hypocritical assertion. What is it that deprives them of the special grades or 'nambardaries', etc.? What does make the authorities to keep them aloof and separated from all other convicts? The same thing can help in the classification also.

As for the special demands, we have already stated them in full in our memorandum to the Punjab Jail Enquiry Committee. We would however particularly emphasise that no political

prisoner, whatever his offence may be, should be given any hard and undignified labour for which he may not feel the aptitude. All of them, confined in one jail, should be kept together in the same ward. At least one standard daily newspaper in vernacular or English should be given to them. Full and proper facilities for study should be granted. Lastly, they should be allowed to supplement their expenses for diet and clothing from their private sources.

We still hope that the government will carry into effect without further delay its promise made to us and to the public, so that there may not be another occasion for resuming the hunger strike. Unless and until we find a definite move on the part of the government to redeem its promise in the course of the next seven days, we shall be forced to resume the hunger strike.

Yours, etc.
Bhagat Singh, Dutt
& others

dated: 28th Jan., 1930 Undertrials, Lahore Conspiracy Case

Letter the Punjab Governor: "No Hanging, Please Shoot Us"

As the charge against the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case was that of waging war against the King, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru wrote this letter to the Governor of the Punjab urging that they should be treated as war prisoners. They, therefore, asked the Governor to issue orders for shooting them rather than hanging them.

To

The Punjab Governor

Sir,

With due respect we beg to bring to your kind notice the following:

That we were sentenced to death on 7th October 1930 by a British Court, L.C.C. Tribunal, constituted under the Special Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance, promulgated by the H.E. The Viceroy, the Head of the British Government of India, and that the main charge against us was that of having waged war against H.M. King George, the King of England.

The above-mentioned findings of the Court presupposed two things:

First, that there exists a state of war between the British Nation and the Indian Nation and, secondly, that we had actually participated in that war and were, therefore, war prisoners.

The second presupposition seems to be a little bit flattering, but nevertheless it is too tempting to resist the desire of acquiescing in it.

State of War

As regards the first, we are constrained to go into some detail. Apparently there seems to be no such war as the phrase indicates. Nevertheless, please allow us to accept the validity of the presupposition taking it at its face value. But in order to be correctly understood we must explain it further. Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and the natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British Capitalists or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even on purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus. All these things make no difference. No matter, if your Government tries and succeeds in winning over the leaders of the upper strata of the Indian Society through petty concessions and compromises and thereby cause a temporary demoralisation in the main body of the forces. No matter, if once again the vanguard of the Indian movement, the revolutionary party, finds itself deserted in the thick of the war. No matter if the leaders to whom personally we are much indebted for the sympathy and feelings they expressed for us, but nevertheless we cannot overlook the fact that they did become so callous as to ignore and not to make a mention in the peace negotiation of even the homeless, friendless and penniless of female workers who are alleged to be belonging to the vanguard and whom the leaders consider to be enemies of their utopian non-violent cult which has already become a thing of the past, the heroines who had ungrudgingly sacrificed or offered for sacrifice their husbands, brothers, and all that were nearest and dearest to them, including themselves, whom your government has declared to be outlaws. No matter, if your agents stoop so low as to fabricate baseless calumnies against their spotless characters to damage their and their party's reputation. The war shall continue.

Choice is Yours

It may assume different shapes at different times. It may become now open, now hidden, now purely agitational, now fierce life and death struggle. The choice, of course, whether bloody or comparatively peaceful, which it should adopt, rests with you. Choose whichever you like. But that war shall be incessantly waged without taking into consideration the petty…* and the meaningless ethical ideologies. It shall be waged ever with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the Socialist Republic is established and the present social order is completely replaced by a new social order, based on social prosperity and thus every sort of exploitation is put an end to and the humanity is ushered into the era of genuine and permanent peace. In the very near future the final battle shall be fought and final settlement arrived at.

The days of capitalist and imperialist exploitation are numbered. The war neither began with us nor is it going to end with our lives. It is the inevitable consequence of the historic events and the existing environments. Our humble sacrifices shall be only a link in the chain that has very accurately been beautified by the unparalleled sacrifice of Mr. Das and most tragic but noblest sacrifice of Comrade Bhagawati Charan and the glorious death of our dear warrior Azad.

Firing Squad

As to the question of our fates, please allow us to say that when you have decided to put us to death, you will certainly do it. You have got the power in your hands and the power is the greatest justification in this world. We know that the maxim "Might is right" serves as your guiding motto. The whole of our trial was just a proof of that.

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* Words not legible—ed.

What we wanted to point out was that according to the verdict of your court we had waged war and were therefore war prisoners. And we claim to be treated as such, i.e., we claim to be shot dead instead of to be hanged. It rests with you to prove that you really meant what your court has said.

We request and hope that you will very kindly order the military department to send its detachment to perform our execution.

Yours, etc.
Bhagat Singh
Raj Guru
Sukhdev

Letter to Batukeshwar Dutt: Advice to those Comrades who had Escaped Capital Punishment*

This was in the form of an advice to those comrades who had not been sentenced to death. Bhagat Singh outlined the unfinished task of making a revolution in India and argued that the onus of completing the revolution lay on these comrades.

Central Jail, Lahore
November, 1930

Dear brother,

The judgement has been delivered. I am condemned to death. In these cells, besides myself, there are many other prisoners who are waiting to be hanged. The only prayer of these people is that somehow or other they may escape the noose. Perhaps I am the only man amongst them who is anxiously waiting for the day when I will be fortunate enough to embrace the gallows for my ideal.

I will climb the gallows gladly and show to the world as to how bravely the revolutionaries can sacrifice themselves for the cause.

I am condemned to death, but you are sentenced to transportation for life. You will live and, while living, you will have to show to the world that the revolutionaries not only die for their ideals but can face every calamity. Death should not be

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* The original English version appeared in *New Era*, an English weekly from Calcutta (now defunct). It could not be traced. Its Hindi version, however, is available. The above has been re-translated from Hindi.

a means to escape the worldly difficulties. Those revolutionaries who have by chance escaped the gallows should live and show to the world that they can not only embrace gallows for the ideal but also bear the worst type of tortures in the dark dingy prison cells.

Yours
Bhagat Singh

Letter to Convicts of the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case*

The convicts of the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, who were lodged next to Bhagat Singh's cell in jail, sought to know his opinion on his 'desire to live'. Bhagat Singh's argument is highly relevant and philosophical.

March 22, 1931

Comrades,

The desire to live is natural. It is in me also. I do not want to conceal it. But it is conditional. I don't want to live as a prisoner or under restrictions. My name has become a symbol of Indian revolution. The ideal and the sacrifices of the revolutionary party have elevated me to a height beyond which I will never be able to rise If I live.

Today people do not know my weaknesses. If I escape gallows those weaknesses will come before them and the symbol of revolution will get tarnished or perhaps it may vanish altogether. On the other hand, if I mount the gallows boldly and with a smile, that will inspire Indian mothers and they will aspire that their children should also become Bhagat Singh. Thus the number of persons ready to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of our country will increase enormously. It will then become impossible for imperialism to face the tide of the revolution, and all their might and their satanic efforts will not be able to stop its onward march.

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* Translated from the Urdu original.

Yes, one thing pricks me even today. My heart nurtured some ambitions for doing something for humanity and for my country. I have not been able to fulfil even one thousandth part of those ambitions. If I live I might perhaps get a chance to fuilfil them. If ever it came to my mind that I should not die, it came from this end only.

I am proud of myself these days and I am anxiously waiting for the final test. I wish the day may come nearer soon.

Your comrade
Bhagat Singh

Letter to Sukhdev Contemplating Suicide*

When the hearing of his case was over, Sukhdev expecting life transportation for him, wrote to Bhagat Singh that in case convicted for life he will commit suicide. This reply of Bhagat Singh to Sukhdev is a sharp reaction saying "escaping from hardships is cowardice".

Dear Brother

I have gone through your letter attentively and many times. I realize that the changed situation has affected us differently. The things you hated outside have now become essential to you. In the same way, the things I used to support strongly are of no significance to me any more. For example, I believed in personal love, but now this feeling has ceased to occupy any particular position in my heart and mind. While outside, you were strongly opposed to it but now a drastic change and radicalization is apparent in your ideas about it. You experience it as an extremely essential part of human existence and you have found a particular kind of happiness in the experience.

You may still recollect that one day I had discussed suicide with you. That time I told you that in some situations suicide may be justifiable, but you contested my point. I vividly remember the time an place of our conversation. We talked about this in the Shahanshahi Kutia one evening. You said in jest that such a cowardly act can never be justified. You said that acts of this kind were horrible and heinous, but I see that you

* Translated from Hindi.

have now made an about-turn on this subject. Now you find it is not only proper in certain situations but also necessary and even essential. My opinion is what you had held earlier, that suicide is a heinous crime. It is an act of complete cowardice. Leave alone revolutionaries, no individual can ever justify such an act.

You say you fail to understand how suffering alone can serve the country. Such a question from a person like you is really perplexing, because how much thoughtfully we loved the motto of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha—"to suffer and sacrifice through service". I believe that you served as much as was possible. Now is the time when you should suffer for what you did. Another point is that this is exactly the moment when you have to lead the entire people.

Man acts only when he is sure of the justness of his action, as we threw the bomb in the Legislative Assembly. After the action, it is the time for bearing the consequences of that act. Do you think that had we tried to avoid the punishment by pleading for mercy, we would have been more justified? No, this would have had an adverse effect on the masses. We are now quite successful in our endeavour.

At the time of our imprisonment, the condition for the political prisoners of our party were very miserable. We tried to improve that. I tell you quite seriously that we believed we would die very shortly. Neither we were aware of the technique of forced feeding nor did we ever think of it. We were ready to die. Do you mean to say that we were intending to commit suicide? No. Striving and sacrificing one's life for a superior ideal can never be called suicide. We are envious of the death of our Comrade Yatindra Nath Das. Will you call it suicide? Ultimately, our sufferings bore fruit. A big movement started in the whole of the country. We were successful in our aim. Death in the struggles of this kind is an ideal death.

Apart from this, the comrades among us, who believe that they will be awarded death, should await that day patiently when the sentence will be announced and they will be hanged. This death will also be beautiful, but committing suicide—to cut short the life just to avoid some pain—is cowardice. I want to tell you that obstacles make a man perfect. Neither you not I, rather none of us, have suffered any pain so far. That part of our life has started only now.

You will recollect that we have talked several times about realism in the Russian literature, which is nowhere visible in our own. We highly appreciate the situations of pain in their stories, but we do not feel that spirit of suffering within ourselves. We also admire their passion and the extraordinary height of their characters, but we never bother to find out the reason. I will say that only the reference to their resolve to bear pain has produced the intensity, the suffering of pain, and this has given great depth and height to their characters and literature. We become pitiable and ridiculous when we imbibe an unreasoned mysticism in our life without any natural or substantial basis. People like us, who are proud to be revolutionary in every sense, should always be prepared to bear all the difficulties, anxieties, pain and suffering which we invite upon ourselves by the struggles initiated by us and for which we call ourselves revolutionary.

I want to tell you that in jail, and in jail alone, can a person get an occasion to study empirically the great social subjects of crime and sin. I have read some literature on this and only the jail is the proper place for the self-study on all these topics. The best parts of the self-study for one is to suffer oneself.

You know it that the suffering of political prisoners in the jails of Russia caused, in the main, the revolution in the prison-administration after the overthrow of Czardom. Is India not in need of such persons who are fully aware of this problem and

have personal experience of these things? It will not suffice to say that someone else would do it, or that many other people are there to do it. Thus, men who find it quite dishonourable and hateful to leave the revlutionary responsibilities to others should start their struggle against the existing system with total devotion. They should violate these rules but they should also keep in mind the propriety, because unnecessary and improper attempts can never be considered just. Such agitations will shorten the process of revolution. All the arguments which you gave to keep yourself aloof from all such movements, are incomprehensible to me. Some of our friends are either fools or ignorant. They find your behaviour quite strange and incomprehensible. (They themselves say they cannot comprehend it because you are above and very far from their understanding.)

In fact, if you feel that jail life is really humiliating, why don't you try to improve it by agitating? Perhaps, you will say that this struggle would be futile, but this is precisely the argument which is usually used as a cover by weak people to avoid participation in every movement. This is the reply which we kept on hearing outside the jail from the people who were anxious to escape from getting entangled in revolutionary movements. Shall I now hear the same argument from you? What could our party of a handful of people do in comparison to the vastness of its aims and ideals? Shall we infer from this that we erred gravely in starting our work altogether? No, inferences of this kind will be improper. This only shows the inner weakness of the man who thinks like this.

You write further that it cannot be expected of a man that he will have the same thinking after going through 14 long years of suffering in the prison, which he had before, because the jail life will crush all his ideas. May I ask you whether the situation outside the jail was any bit more favourable to our

ideas? Even then, could we have left it because of our failures? Do you mean to imply that had we not entered the field, no revolutionary work would have taken place at all? If this be your contention, then you are mistaken, though it is right that we also proved helpful to an extent in changing the environment. But, then, we are only a product of the need of our times.

I shall even say that Marx—the father of communism—did not actually originate this idea. The Industrial Revolution of Europe itself produced men of this kind. Marx was one among them. Of course, Marx was also instrumental to an extent in gearing up the wheels of his time in a particular way.

I (and you too) did not give birth to the ideas of socialism and communism in this country; this is the consequence of the effects of our time and situations upon ourselves. Of course, we did a bit to propagate these ideas, and therefore I say that since we have already taken a tough task upon ourselves, we should continue to advance it. The people will not be guided by our committing suicides to escape the difficulties; on the contrary, this will be quite a reactionary step.

We continued our work despite the testing environment of disappointments, pressures and violence ordained by the Jail rules. While we worked, we were made target of many kinds of difficulties. Even men who were proud to proclaim themselves to be great revolutionaries, deserted us. Were these conditions not testing in the extreme? Then, what was the reason and the logic of continuing our agitation and efforts?

Does this simple argument not by itself give added strength to our ideas? And, don't we have instance of our revolutionary comrades who suffered for their convictions in jails and are still working on return from jails? Had Bakunin argued like you, he would have committed suicide right in the beginning. Today, you find many revolutionaries occupying responsible posts in the Russian State who had passed the greater part of their lives

in prison, completing their sentences. Man must try hard to stick to his beliefs. No one can say what future has in store.

Do you remember that when we were discussing that some concentrated and effective poison should also be kept in our bomb factories, you opposed it very vehemently. The very idea was repugnant to you. You had no faith in it. So, what has happened now? Here, even the difficult and complex conditions do not obtain. I feel revulsion even in discussing this question. You hated even that attitude of mind which permits suicide. You will kindly excuse me for saying that had you acted according to this belief right at the time of your imprisonment (that is, you had committed suicide by taking poison), you would have served the revolutionary cause, but at this moment, even the thought of such an act is harmful to our cause.

There is just one more point which I will like to draw your attention to. We do not believe in God, hell and heaven, punishment and rewards, that is in any Godly accounting of human life. Therefore, we must think of life and death on materialist lines. When I was brought here from Delhi for the purpose of identification, some intelligence officers talked to me on this topic, in the presence of my father. They said that since I did not try to save my life by divulging secrets, it proved the presence of an acute agony in my life. They argued that a death of this kind will be something like suicide. But I had replied that a man with beliefs and ideals like mine, could never think of dying uselessly. We want to get the maximum value for our lives. We want to serve humanity as much as possible. Particularly a man like me, whose life is nowhere sad or worried, can never think of suicide even, leave alone attempting it. The same thing I want to tell you now.

I hope you will permit me to tell you what I think about myself. I am certain of capital punishment for me. I do not expect even a bit of moderation or amnesty. Even if there is

amnesty, it will not be for all, and even that amnesty will be for others only, not for us; it will be extremely restricted and burdened with various conditions. For us, neither there can be any amnesty nor it will ever happen. Even then, I wish that release calls for us should be made collectively and globally. Along with that, I also wish that when the movement reaches its climax, we should be hanged. It is my wish that if at any time any honourable and fair compromise is possible, issues like our case may never obstruct it. When the fate of the country is being decided, the fate of individuals should be forgotten. As revolutionaries, we are fully aware of all the past experiences. Therefore, we do not believe that there can be any sudden change in the attitude of our rulers, particularly in the British race. Such a surprising change is impossible without revolution. A revolution can be achieved only through sustained striving, sufferings and sacrifices. And it shall be achieved. As far as my attitude is concerned, I can welcome facilities and amnesty for all only when its effect is permanent and some indelible impressions are made on the hearts of the people of the country through our hanging. Only this much and nothing more.

Letter to Father

When Bhagat Singh's trial reached its final stage, Kishan Singh, moved by fatherly love and affection, wrote a letter to the Viceroy and the Tribunal to save his son from gallows. Learning of his father's move, Bhagat Singh was so upset that he treated it as an act of weakness and cowardice on the part of his father. The letter shows that Bhagat Singh was determined to face gallows with exemplary courage and pride.

Oct. 4, 1930

My dear father,

I was astounded to learn that you had submitted a petition to the members of the Special Tribunal in connection with my defence. This intelligence proved to be too severe a blow to be borne with equanimity. It has upset the whole equilibrium of my mind. I have not been able to understand how you could think it proper to submit such a petition at this stage and in these circumstances. Inspite of all the sentiments and feelings of a father, I don't think you were at all entitled to make such a move on my behalf without even consulting me. You know that in the political field my views have always differed with those of yours. I have always been acting independently without having cared for your approval or disapproval.

I hope you can recall to yourself that since the very beginning you have been trying to convince me to fight my case very seriously and to defend myself properly. But you also know that I was always opposed to it. I never had any desire to defend myself and never did I seriously think about it. Whether

it was a mere vague ideology or that I had certain arguments to justify my position, is a different question and that cannot be discussed here.

You know that we have been pursuing a definite policy in this trial. Every action of mine ought to have been consistent with that policy, my principle and my programme. At present the circumstances are altogether different, but had the situation been otherwise, even then I would have been the last man to offer defence. I had only one idea before me throughout the trial, i.e. to show complete indifference towards the trial inspite of serious nature of the charges against us. I have always been of opinion that all the political workers should be indifferent and should never bother about the legal fight in the law courts and should boldly bear the heaviest possible sentences inflicted upon them. They may defend themselves but always from purely political considerations and never from a personal point of view. Our policy in this trial has always been consistent with this principle; whether we were successful in that or not is not for me to judge. We have always been doing our duty quite disinterstedly.

In the statement accompanying the text of Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance the Viceroy had stated that the accused in this case were trying to bring both law and justice into contempt. The situation afforded us an opportunity to show to the public whether we were trying to bring law into contempt or whether others were doing so. People might disagree with us on this point. You might be one of them. But that never meant that such moves should be made on my behalf without my consent or even my knowledge. My life is not so precious, at least to me, as you may probably think it to be. It is not at all worth buying at the cost of my principles. There are other comrades of mine whose case is as serious as that of mine. We had adopted a common policy and we shall stand to the last, no

matter how dearly we have to pay individually for it.

Father, I am quite perplexed. I fear I might overlook the ordinary principle of etiquette and my language may become a little but harsh while criticising or rather censoring this move on your part. Let me be candid. I feel as though I have been stabbed at the back. Had any other person done it, I would have considered it to be nothing short of treachery. But in your case, let me say that it has been a weakness—a weakness of the worst type.

This was the time where everybody's mettle was being tested. Let me say, father, you have failed. I know you are as sincere a patriot as one can be. I know you have devoted your life to the cause of Indian independence, but why, at this moment, have you displayed such a weakness? I cannot understand.

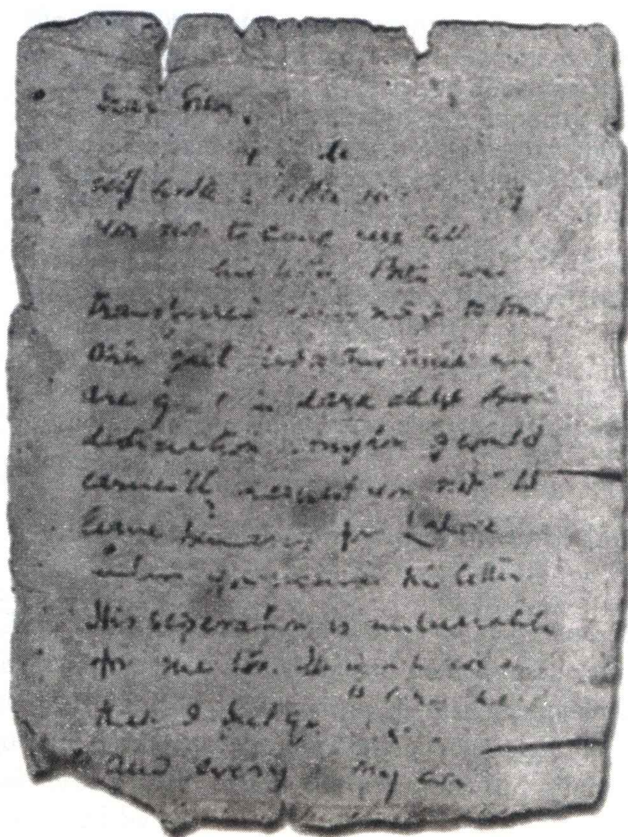
In the end, I would like to inform you and my other friends and all the people interested in my case, that I have not approved of your move. I am still not at all in favour of offering any defence. Even if the court had accepted that petition submitted by some of my co-accused regarding defence, etc., I would have not defended myself. My applications submitted to the Tribunal regarding my interview during the hunger strike, were misinterpreted and it was published in the press that I was going to offer defence, though in reality I was never willing to offer any defence. I still hold the same opinion as before. My friends in the Borstal Jail will be taking it as a treachery and betrayal on my part. I shall not even get an opportunity to clear my position before them.

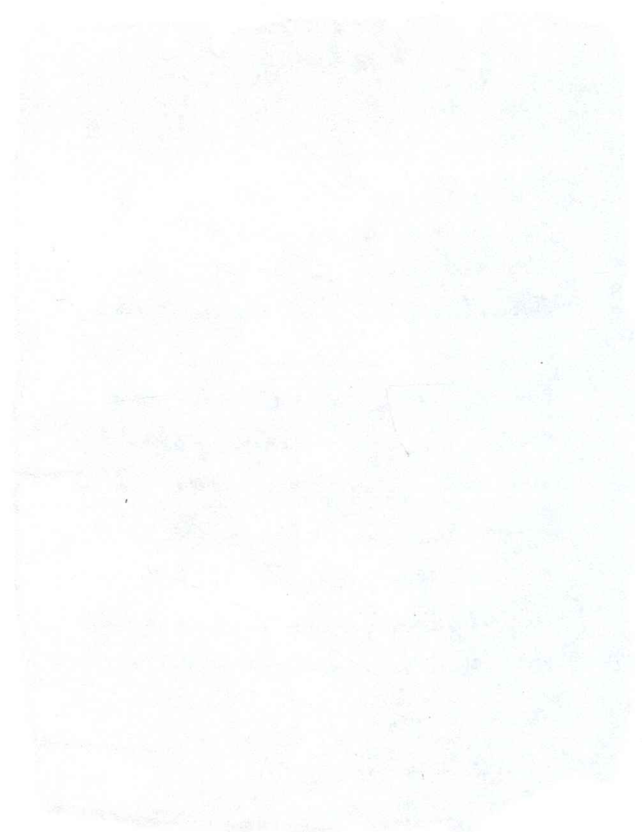
I want that public should know all the details about this complication, and, therefore, I request you to publish this letter.

Your loving son
Bhagat Singh

PART-III

APPENDICES





Appendix 1

Manifesto of the Hindustan Republican Association

The constitution of the Hindustan Republican Association was prepared by Shachindra Nath Sanyal at the end of 1924. The qualification which it laid down for enrolment as district organiser included the capacity to grasp political, social and economic problems that India faced at that time. A copy of this constitution is available in the National Archives of India.

An organ of the Revolutionary Party of India
1st Jan., 1925
Vol. I

(Every honest Indian should read the whole of it and circulate it among his friends.)

Manifesto of Revolutionary Party of India

"Chaos is necessary to the birth of a new star." And the birth of life is accompanied by agony and pain. India is also taking a new birth, and is passing through that inevitable chaos and agony. Indians shall play their destined role, when all calculations shall prove futile, when the wise and the mighty shall be bewildered by the simple and the weak, when great empires shall crumble down and new nations shall arise and surprise humanity with the splendour and glory which shall be all its own.

This new power, which is shaking the world from its very depths, this new spirit which is working miracles behind the scene, is also manifesting itself in the young blood of India and is taking the shape of a movement which is despised and ignored by the wise and the learned, and is being described as the wild dreams of a few mad men. This remarkable movement is the revolutionary movement in young India. The revolutionary movement has unnerved the weak, has inspired the robust and healthy, and has confounded the worldly wise and the learned. This movement can never be crushed just as much as the coming of the spring can never be thwarted. It will never die out until it has fulfilled the mission for which it has taken its birth. Tyrants will oppress it, the faithless will taunt at it, and the confounded will denounce it, but thoughts and ideas can never be crushed by the sword, and the noble impulse that has taken birth in the very depths of our being can never be ignored, nor taunted.

This revolutionary movement is the manifestation of the new life that has taken birth in the Nation. To denounce this life is to denounce one's own understanding.

Twenty years of ruthless repression has not been able to crush it. Scathing denunciation by the renowned public leaders has not been able to arrest its steady growth. The movement stands mightier today than what it was before. The prospects of this revolutionary party were never so bright as they are today. The future is assured.

Let no Indian deny the existence of this revolutionary party in order to denounce the repressive measures of the foreign rulers. The foreigners have no right to rule over India and therefore they must be denounced and driven out. Not that they have committed any particular act of violence or crime. There are the natural consequences of a foreign rule. This foreign rule must be abolished. They have no justification to rule over India except the justification of sword and therefore the revolutionary

party had taken to the sword. But the sword of the revolutionary party bears ideas at its edge.

The immediate object of the revolutionary party in the domain of politics is to establish a Federal Republic of United State of India by an organised and armed revolution. The final constitution of this Republic shall be framed and declared at a time when the representatives of India shall have the power to carry out their decision. But the basic principles of this Republic will be universal suffrage and abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible, e.g. the railways and other means of transportation and communication, the mines and other kinds of very great industries such as the manufacture of steel and ships all these shall be nationalised. In this Republic the electors shall have the right to recall their representatives, if so desired, otherwise the democracy shall become a mockery. In this Republic, the legislature shall have the power to control the executives and replace them whenever necessity will arise.

The revolutionary party is not national but international in the sense that its ultimate object is to bring harmony in the world by respecting and guaranteeing the diverse interests of the different nations. It aims not at competition but at cooperation between the different nations and states and in this respect it follows the footsteps of great Indian Rishis of the glorious past and of Bolshevik Russia in the modern age. Good for humanity is no vain and empty word with the Indian revolutionaries. But the weak, the coward and the powerless can do no good either to themselves or to humanity.

With regard to the communal question, the revolutionary party contemplates to grant whatever rights the different communities may demand, provided they do not clash with the interests of other communities and they lead ultimately to hearty and organic union in different communities in the near future.

In the domain of economic and social welfare the party will foster the spirit of cooperation on as large a scale as possible. Instead of private and unorganised business enterprises, the party prefers cooperative union.

In the spiritual domain the party aims at establishing the truth and preaching it that the world is not Maya, an illusion to be ignored and despised at, but that it is the manifestation of the one individual soul, the supreme source of all power, all knowledge and all beauty.

The revolutionary party has its own policy and its own programme. It cannot for obvious reasons divulge all its secrets. But when it will become quite sure that the Govt. happens to know more than our own people, then the public will also be informed of its plan and methods without any hesitation at all.

This revolutionary party pursues the policy of cooperation when possible and dissociation where necessary with the Congress and its different parties. But this party views all constitutional agitation in this country with contempt and ridicule. It is a mockery to say that India's salvation can be achieved through constitutional means, where no constitution exists.

It is a self-deception to say that India's political liberty can be attained through peaceful and legitimate means. When the enemy is determined to break the peace at his own convenience, the fine phrase "legitimate" loses all its charm and significance when one pledges himself to maintain peace at all costs.

Our public leaders hesitate to speak in plain terms that India wants complete autonomy free from foreign control. They perhaps are ignorant of the fact that nations are born through the inspiration of great ideals. The spiritual ideal which hesitates to accept the spirit of complete autonomy can hardly be called spiritual, though it may seemingly appear the most sublime. The time has come to speak the truth in the most unmistakable

terms and to place before the nation an ideal worth the name.

The ideal before us is to serve humanity in an organised way. The ideal can never be realised by India so long as she remains in bondage or slavery, so long as India remains British India. In order that India may realise her ideal she must have a separate and independent existence. This independence can never be achieved through peaceful and constitutional means. Even a child can understand that the laws that govern British India are not made by Indians, nor can they have any control over them. British India can never be transformed into a federal republic of the United States of India through the British laws and constitution. Young Indians, shake off your illusion, face realities with a stout heart, and do not avoid struggle, difficulties and sacrifices. The inevitable is to come. Do not be misguided any more. Peace and tranquility you cannot achieve by peaceful and legitimate means. The following memorable words of a great English author Mr. Robertson may serve to make the wise men of India wiser still:

"The movement and programme of reform was mainly the achievement of Irish and Protestant leaders, to whom British statement had revealed the fatal secret that England could be bullied but not argued into justice and generosity." (*English Under Hanoverians*, p. 197).

Indian public leaders are still ignorant of this fatal secret, or else they are foolishly wise to remain ignorants.

The wise men of India say that it is absurd to cherish the hope that India can be reconquered by force of arms, though they forget that it is equally or more absurd to believe that a handful of Englishmen have kept under subjugation by the force of arms one-fifth of the whole human race. Posterity may well doubt the authenticity of this fact that a handful of Englishmen even ruled over India for a century; it is so inconceivable.

A few words more about terrorism and anarchism. These

two words are playing the most mischievous part in India today. They are being invariably misapplied whenever any reference to revolution arises to be made, because it is so very convenient to denounce the revolutionary under that name. The Indian revolutionaries are neither terrorists nor anarchists. They never aim at spreading anarchy in the land and therefore they can never properly be called anarchists. Terrorism is never their object and they cannot be called terrorists. They do not believe that terrorism alone can bring independence and they do not want terrorism for terrorism's sake although they may at times resort to this method as a very effective means of retaliation. The present Govt. exists simply because the foreigners have successfully been able to terrorise the Indian people. The Indian people do not love their English masters, they do not want them to be here; but they do help the Britishers simply because they are terribly afraid of them and this very fear resists the Indians from extending their helping hands to the revolutionaries, not that they do not love them.

The official terrorism is surely to be met by counter-terrorism. A spirit of utter helplessness pervades every strata of our society and terrorism is an effective means of restoring the proper spirits in the society without which progress will be difficult. Moreover, the English masters and their hired lackeys can never be allowed to do whatever they like, uninterrupted, unmodested. Every possible difficulty and resistance must be thrown in their way. Terrorism has an international bearing also, because the ardent enemies of England are at once drawn towards India through terrorism and revolutionary demonstrations, and the revolutionary party has deliberately abstained itself from entering into this terroristic campaign at the present movement even at the greatest of provocations in the form of outrages committed on their sisters and mothers by the agents of a foreign government, simply because the party is waiting to deliver the

final blow. But when expediency will demand it, the party will unhesitatingly enter into a desperate campaign of terrorism, when the life of every official and individual who will be helping the foreign ruler in any way will be made intolerable, be he Indian or European, high or low. But even then the party will never forget that terrorism is not the object, and they will try incessantly to organise a band of selfless and devoted workers who will devote their best energies towards the political and social emancipation of their country.

They will always remember that the making of nations requires the self-sacrifice of thousands of obscure men and women who care more for the idea of their country than for their own comfort or interest, their own lives or the lives of those whom they love.

Sd/- V.K.
President, Central Council,
R.P. of India.

Appendix II

Constitution of the Hindustan Republican Association*

The manifesto of the Hindustan Republican Association was drafted by Shachindra Nath Sanyal in 1924 and was issued on behalf of the Revolutionary Party of India. It advocated the establishment of a Federal Republic of the United States of India through an organised and armed revolution. This manifesto was distributed in north India at the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925.

Name. The name of the association shall be the Hindustan Republican Association.

Object. The object of the association shall be to establish a Federated Republic of the United States of India by an organised and armed revolution.

The final form of the constitution of the Republic shall be framed and declared by the representatives of the people at the time when they will be in a position to enforce their decisions. The basic principle of the Republic shall be universal suffrage and the abolition of all systems which make any kind of exploitation of man by man possible.

Constitution—Governing Body. The governing body of the association shall be the Central Council composed of the representatives of every province of India. All decisions of the Central Council shall be vested with absolute powers.

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* FileNo. 375 of 195, Home Department (Political), Government of India (NAI).

The principle function of the Central Council shall be to supervise, adjust and coordinate the activities in the different provinces of which it shall have full knowledge. The Central Council shall be in direct charge of the work to be carried on in countries outside India.

Provincial Organisation. There shall be a committee, ordinarily of five men representing the five different departments of association in every province, which shall regulate all the activities of association in the province.

All decisions of the committee shall be arrived at by unanimous consent.

Departments. Every provincial organisation shall have the following departments:

1. Propaganda
2. Collection of men
3. Collection of funds and terrorism
4. Collection and storage of arms and ammunitions
5. Foreign connection

1. Propaganda shall be carried on: (a) by an open and a secret press, (b) through private conversation, (c) through public platforms, (d) through a system of organised Kathas, and (e) though magic lantern slides.
2. Collection of men shall be done by organisers in charge of different districts.
3. Funds shall be collected generally by means of voluntary subscriptions and occasionally by contributions exacted by force. In extreme cases of repressions by agent or agents of a foreign government, it shall be the duty of the association to retaliate in whatever form it shall consider suitable.
4. Every effort shall be made to arm every member of the association; but all such arms shall be stored at different centres and be used according to the directions of the provincial committee only.

No arms shall be removed from any place in the district or used without the knowledge and the permission of the district organiser or the officer-in-charger of this department.

5. Foreign Connection. This department shall carry on its work under the direct orders from the CC.

District Organiser—His Duties. The district organiser shall be in sole charge of the members of his district.

He shall try to start branches of this association in every part of his district. In order to have efficient recruitment he should keep himself in touch with the different public bodies and institutions in his district.

The district organisers shall be subordinate in every way to the provincial committee who shall supervise and direct all the activities.

The district organiser must see that the members are divided into separate groups and the different groups do not know each other.

So far as possible the district organisers of any province must not know the activities of each other and, if possible, they must also not know each other by person or by name.

No district organiser shall leave his station without previously informing his superior.

Qualifications of a District Organiser

1. He must have the tact and the ability to guide and handle men of different temperaments.
2. He must have the capacity to grasp political, social and economical problems of the present day with special reference to his motherland.
3. He must be able to grasp the spirit of the history of India, with special reference to the particular civilisation which India has evolved.

4. He must have faith in the mission and the destiny of a free India, which is to bring harmony in the different spheres of human activities, both spiritual and material.
5. He must be courageous and self-sacrificing without which all his brilliant qualities will have no real value.

Provincial Council and Central Council

PC and CC members must see that every member of this association gets full scope and ample opportunity to develop and use his individual abilities, without which the association will tend to disintegrate.

PROGRAMME

All the activities of the association shall be divided into two parts: public and private.

Public:

1. To start association in the form of clubs, libraries, seva samitis and the like.
2. To start labour and peasant organisations. Suitable men must be engaged on behalf of the association to organise and control the labourers in the different factories, the railways and in the coalfields, and instil into their minds that they are not for the revolution but that the revolution is for them.

   Similarly the Kisans must also be organized.
3. To start weekly paper in every province to propagate the idea of an independent Indian Republic.
4. To publish booklets and pamphlets with a view to enlighten public as to the course of events and the current of thoughts as prevalent in the countries outside India.
5. To utilise and influence the Congress and other public activities as far as possible.

Private:

(a) To establish a secret press and through it to publish such literature which cannot easily be published openly.

(b) To circulate such literature.

(c) To establish branches of this association in every part of the country, district by district.

(d) To collect funds in as many ways as possible.

(e) To send suitable men to foreign countries where they may get military or scientific training so that they may become military or scientific experts to take charge of armies and ammunition factories at the time of open rebellion.

(f) To import arms and ammunitions and also to manufacture them, as far as possible, in the country.

(g) To remain in close touch and to cooperate with the Indian revolutionaries outside India.

(h) To get the members of the association enlisted into the present army.

(i) To enlist the sympathy of the public to our cause by occasional retaliatory measures and propaganda and thus create a band of sympathisers.

MEMBERSHIP

All members shall be recruited by organisers in charge of different districts in every province. Every member must be ready to devote his whole time for the association and to risk his life if necessary.

He must obey the commands of the district organiser implicitly.

He should develop his own initiative and remember that the success of the association depends much on the resourcefulness, the initiative and the sense of duty of its individual members.

He must behave in a manner that may not prejudice the

cause for which his association stands or may not do any harm directly or indirectly to his organisation.

No member of this association shall belong to any other organisation without the consent of the district organiser.

No member shall leave his station without informing the district organiser about it.

Every member must try to avoid being suspected of revolutionary connections by the police or public.

Every member must remember that his individual behaviour and mistakes might lead to the ruin of the whole organisation.

No member shall conceal anything from the district organiser as far as his public life is concerned.

Members who will betray shall be punished either with expulsion or death.

The authority of punishment shall rest entirely with the "PC".

Appendix III

Manifesto of The Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Punjab

Naujawan Bharat Sabha was a legal and open mass organization of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army). That is why it came out with the slogan: "Revolution by the masses and for the masses". Bhagat Singh was the General Secretary of the Sabha.

Young Comrades,

Our country is passing through a chaos. There is mutual distrust and despair prevailing everywhere. The great leaders have lost faith in the cause and most of them no more enjoy the confidence of the masses. There is no programme and no enthusiasm among the 'champions' of Indian independence. There is chaos everywhere. But chaos is inevitable and a necessary phase in the course of making of a nation. It is during such critical periods that the sincerity of the workers is tested, their character built, real programme formed, and then, with a new spirit, new hopes, new faith and enthusiasm, the work is started. Hence there is nothing to be disgusted of.

We are, however, very fortunate to find ourselves on the threshold of a new era. We no more hear the news of reaching chaos that used to be sung vastly in praise of the British bureaucracy. The historic question "Would you be governed by sword or pen", no more lies unanswered. Those who put that question to us have themselves answered it. In the words of

Lord Birkenhead, "With the sword we won India and with the sword we shall retain it." Thanks to this candour everything is clear now. After remembering Jallianwala and Manawala outrages it looks absurd to quote that "A good government cannot be a substitute for self-government." It is self-evident.

A word about the blessings of the British rule in India. Is it necessary to quote the whole volumes of Romesh Chandra Dutt, William Digby and Dadabhai Naoroji in evidence to prove the decline and ruin of Indian industries? Does it require any authorities to prove that India, with the richest soil and mines, is today one of the poorest, that India which could be proud of so glorious a civilisation, is today the most backward country with only 5% literacy? Do not the people know that India has to pay the largest toll of human life with the highest child death rate in the world? The epidemics like plague, cholera, influenza and such other diseases are becoming common day by day. Is it not disgraceful for us to hear again and again that we are not fit for self-government? Is it not really degrading for us, with Guru Govind Singh, Shivaji and Hari Singh as our heroes, to be told that we are incapable of defending ourselves? Alas, we have done little to prove the contrary. Did we not see our trade and commerce being crushed in its very infancy in the first effort of Guru Nanak Steamship Company started by Baba Gurdit Singh in 1914; the inhuman treatment meted out to them, far away in Canada, on the way, and, finally, the bloody reception of those despairing, broken-hearted passengers with volleys of shots at Bajbaj, and what not? Did we not see all this? In India, where for the honour of one Dropadi, the great Mahabharat was fought, dozens of them were ravaged in 1919. They were spit at, in their naked faces. Did we not see all this? Yet, we are content with the existing order of affairs. Is this life worth living?

Does it require any revelation now to make us realise that we are enslaved and must be free? Shall we wait for an uncertain

sage to make us feel that we are an oppressed people? Shall we expectantly wait for divine help or some miracle to deliver us from bondage? Do we not know the fundamental principles of liberty? "Those who want to be free, must themselves strike the blow." Young men, awake, arise; we have slept too long!

We have appealed to the young only. Because the young bear the most inhuman tortures smilingly and face death without hesitation. Because the whole history of human progress is written with the blood of young men and young women. And because the reforms are ever made by the vigour, courage, self-sacrifice and emotional conviction of the young men who do not know enough to be afraid and who feel much more than they think.

Were it not the young men of Japan who come forth in hundreds to throw themselves in the ditches to make a dry path to Port Arthur? And Japan is today one of the foremost nations in the world. Were it not the young Polish people who fought again and again and failed, but fought again heroically throughout the last century? And today we see a free Poland. Who freed Italy from the Austrian yoke? Young Italy.

Do you know the wonders worked by the Young Turks? Do you not daily read what the young Chinese are doing? Were it not the young Russians who scarified their lives for Russia's emancipation? Throughout the last century hundreds and thousands of them were exiled to Siberia for the mere distribution of socialist pamphlets or, like Dostoyevsky, for merely belonging to socialist debating society. Again and again they faced the storm of oppression. But they did not lose the courage. It were they, the young only, who fought. And everywhere the young can fight without hope, without fear and without hesitation. And we find today in the great Russia, the emancipation of the world.

While, we Indians, what are we doing? A branch of *peepal*

tree is cut and religious feelings of the Hindus are injured. A corner of a paper idol, *tazia*, of the idol-breaker Mohammedans is broken, and 'Allah' gets enraged, who cannot be satisfied with anything less than the blood of the infidel Hindus. Man ought to be attached more importance than the animals and, yet, here in India, they break each other's heads in the name of 'sacred animals'. Our vision is circumscribed by....* thinks in terms of internationalism.

There are many others among us who hide their lethargy under the garb of internationalism. Asked to serve their country they reply: "Oh Sirs, we are cosmopolitans and believe in universal brotherhood. Let us not quarrel with the British. They are our brothers." A good idea, a beautiful phrase. But they miss its implication. The doctrine of universal brotherhood demands that the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation must be rendered impossible. Equal opportunity to all without any sort of distinction. But British rule in India is a direct negation of all these, and we shall have nothing to do with it.

A word about social service here. Many good men think that social service (in the narrow sense, as it is used and understood in our country) is the panacea to all our ills and the best method of serving the country. Thus we find many ardent youth contending themselves with distributing grain among the poor and nursing the sick all their life. These men are noble and self-denying but they cannot understand that charity cannot solve the problem of hunger and disease in India and, for that matter, in any other country.

Religious superstitions and bigotry are a great hinderance in our progress. They have proved an obstacle in our way and we must do away with them. "The thing that cannot bear free thought must perish." There are many other such weaknesses

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* Some words are missing here.

which we are to overcome. The conservativeness and orthodoxy of the Hindus, extra-territorialism and fanaticism of the Mohammedans and narrow-mindedness of all the communities in general are always exploited by the foreign enemy. Young men with revolutionary zeal from all communities are required for the task.

Having achieved nothing, we are not prepared to sacrifice anything for any achievement; our leaders are fighting amongst themselves to decide what will be the share of each community in the hoped achievement. Simply to conceal their cowardice and lack of spirit of self-sacrifice, they are creating a false issue and screening the real one. These arm-chair politicians have their eyes set on the handful of bones that may be thrown to them, as they hope, by the mighty rulers. That is extremely humiliating. Those who come forth to fight the battle of liberty cannot sit and decide first that after so much sacrifices, so much achievement must be sure and so much share to be divided. Such people never make any sort of sacrifice. We want people who may be prepared to fight without hope, without fear and without hesitation, and who may be willing to die unhonoured, unwept and unsung. Without that spirit we will not be able to fight the great two-fold battle that lies before us—two-fold because of the internal foe, on the one hand, and a foreign enemy, on the other. Our real battle is against our own disabilities which are exploited by the enemy and some of our own people for their selfish motives.

Young Punjabis, the youth of other provinces are working tremendously in their respective spheres. The organisation and awakening displayed by young Bengal on February 3, should serve as an example to us. Our Punjab, despite the greatest amount of sacrifice and suffering to its credit, is described as a politically backward province. Why? Because, although it belongs to the martial race, we are lacking in organisation and

discipline; we who are proud of the ancient University of Taxila, today stand badly in need of culture. And a culture requires fine literature which cannot be prepared without a common and well developed language. Alas, we have got none.

While trying to solve the above problem that faces our country, we will also have to prepare the masses to fight the greater battle that lies before us. Our political struggle began just after the great War of Independence of 1857. It has passed through different phases. Along with the advent of the 20th century the British bureaucracy has adopted quite a new policy towards India. They are drawing our bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie into their fold by adopting the policy of concessions. Their cause is being made common. The progressive investment of British capital in India will inevitably lead to that end. In the very near future we will find that class and their great leaders having thrown their lot with the foreign rulers. Some round-table conference or any such body will end in a compromise between the two. They will no more be lions and cubs. Even without any conciliation the expected Great War of the entire people will surely thin the ranks of the so-called champions of Indian independence.

The future programme of preparing the country will begin with the motto: "Revolution by the masses and for the masses." In other words, Swaraj for the 90%; Swaraj not only attained by the masses but also for the masses. This is a very difficult task. Though our leaders have offered many suggestions, none had the courage to put forward and carry out successfully any concrete scheme of awakening the masses. Without going into details, we can safely assert that to achieve our object, thousands of our most brilliant young men, like Russian youth, will have to pass their precious lives in villages and make the people understand what the Indian revolution would really mean. They must be made to realise that the revolution which is to come

will mean more than a change of masters. It will, above all, mean the birth of new order of things, a new state. This is not the work of a day or a year. Decades of matchless self-sacrifice will prepare the masses for the accomplishment of that great work and only the revolutionary young men will be able to do that. A revolutionary does not necessarily mean a man of bombs and revolvers.

The task before the young is hard and their resources are scanty. A great many obstacles are likely to block their way. But the earnestness of the few but sincere can overcome them all. The young must come forth. They must see the hard and difficult path that lies before them, the great tasks they have to perform. They must remember in the heart of hearts that "success is but a chance; sacrifice a law". Their lives might be the lives of constant failures, even more wretched than those which Guru Govind Singh had to face throughout his life. Even then they must not repent and say, "Oh, it was all an illusion."

Young men, do not get disheartened when you find such a great battle to fight single-handed, with none to help you. You must realise your own latent strength. Rely on yourselves and success is yours. Remember the words of the great mother of James Garfield which she spoke to her son while sending him away, penniless, helpless and resourceless, to seek his fortune: "Nine times out of ten the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be thrown overboard to swim or sink for himself." Glory to the mother who said these words and glory to those who will rely on them.

Mazzini, that oracle of Italian regeneration, once said: "All great national movements begin with unknown men of the people without influence, except for the faith and the will that counts neither time nor difficulties." Let the boat of life weigh another time. Let it set sail in the Great Ocean, and then:

Anchor is in no stagnant shallow.

Trust the wide and wonderous sea,
Where the tides are fresh for ever,
And the mighty currents free.
There perchance, O young Columbus,
Your new world of truth may be.

Do not hesitate, let not the theory of incarnation haunt your mind and break your courage. Everybody can become great if he strives. Do not forget your own martyrs. Kartar Singh was a young man. Yet, in his teens, when he came forth to serve his country, he ascended the scaffold smiling and echoing "*Bande Mataram*". Bhai Balmukund and Awadh Bihari were both quite young when they gave their lives for the cause. They were from amongst you. You must try to become as sincere patriots and as ardent lovers of liberty as they were. Do not lose patience and sense at one time, and hope at another. Try to make stability and determination a second nature to yourselves.

Let then young men think independently, calmly, serenely and patiently. Let them adopt the cause of Indian independence as the sole aim of their lives. Let them stand on their own feet. They must organise themselves free from any influence and refuse to be exploited any more by the hypocrites and insincere people who have nothing in common with them and who always desert the cause at the critical juncture. In all seriousness and sincerity, let them make the triple motto of "service, suffering, sacrifice" their sole guide. Let them remember that "the making of a nation requires self-sacrifice of thousands of obscure men and women who care more for the idea of their country than for their own comfort and interest, than own lives and the lives of those who they love".

6-4-1928 *Bande Mataram*

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Appendix IV

Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army)

Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army) was prepared by Bhagavati Charan Vohra. It categorically stated that the revolutionaries did not stand for terrorism as an end in itself but as a means to a noble end—making of revolution which meant overthrow of British imperialism and creation of a new social order. The manifesto was distributed at the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929. The manifesto had the approval of Chandra Shekar Azad and Bhagat Singh. A copy of the manifesto is available in the National Archives of India.

"The food on which the tender plant of liberty thrives is the blood of the martyr."

For decades this life blood to the plant of India's liberty is being supplied by revolutionaries. There are few to question the magnanimity of the noble ideals they cherish and the grand sacrifices they have offered, but their normal activities being mostly secret the country is in dark as to their present policy and intentions. This has necessitated the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association to issue this manifesto.

This association stands for revolution in India in order to liberate her from foreign domination by means of organised armed rebellion. Open rebellion by a subject people must always in the nature of things be preceded by secret propaganda and

secret preparations. Once a country enters that phase the task of an alien government becomes impossible. It might linger on for a number of years but its fate is sealed. Human nature, with all its prejudices and conservatism, has a sort of instinctive dread for revolution. Upheavals have always been a terror to holders of power and privilege. Revolution is a phenomenon which nature loves and without which there can be no progress either in nature or in human affairs. Revolution is certainly not unthinking, brutal campaign of murder and incendiarism; it is not a few bombs thrown here and a few shots fired there; neither it is a movement to destroy all remnants of civilisation and blow to pieces time honoured principles of justice and equity. Revolution is not a philosophy of despair or a creed of desperadoes. Revolution may be anti-God but is certainly not anti-Man. It is a vital, living force which is indicative of eternal conflict between the old and the new, between life and living death, between light and darkness. There is no concord, no symphony, no rhythm without revolution. 'The music of the spheres' of which poets have sung, would remain an unreality if a ceaseless revolution were to be eliminated from the space. Revolution is Law, Revolution is Order and Revolution is the Truth.

The youths of our nation have realised this truth. They have learnt painfully the lesson that without revolution there is no possibility of enthroning order, law and love in place of chaos and legal vandalism and hatred which are reigning supreme today. Let no one, in this blessed land of ours, run with the idea that the youths are irresponsible. They know where they stand. None knows better than their own selves, that their path is not strewn with roses. From time to time they have paid a fairly decent price for their ideals. It does not, therefore, lie in the mouth of anybody to say that youthful impetuosity has feasted upon platitudes. It is no good to hurl denunciatory epithets at

our ideology. It is enough to know that our ideas are sufficiently active and powerful to drive us on, aye, even to gallows.

It has become a fashion these days to indulge in wild and meaningless talk of non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi is great and we mean no disrespect to him if we express our emphatic disapproval of the methods advocated by him for our country's emancipation. We would be ungrateful to him if we do not salute him for the immense awakening that has been brought about by his non-cooperation movement in the country. But to us the Mahatma is an impossible visionary. Non-violence may be a noble ideal, but is a thing of the morrow. We can, situated as we are, never hope to win our freedom by mere non-violence. The world is armed to the very teeth. And the world is too much with us. All talk of peace may be sincere, but we of the slave nation cannot, and must not, be led away by such false ideology. What logic, we ask, is there in asking the country to traverse a non-violent path when the world atmosphere is surcharged with violence and exploitation of the weak? We declare with all the emphasis we can command that the youths of the nation cannot be lured by such midsummer night's dreams.

We believe in violence, not as an end itself but as a means to a noble end. And the votaries of non-violence, as also the advocates of caution and circumspection, will readily grant this much at least that we know how to suffer for and to act upto our convictions. Shall we here recount all those sacrifices which our comrades have offered at the altar of our common Mother? Many a heart-rending and soul-stirring scene has been enacted inside the four walls of His Majesty's prison. We have been taken to task for our terroristic policy. Our answer is that terrorism is never the object of revolutionaries, nor do they believe that terrorism alone can bring independence. No doubt the revolutionaries think, and rightly, that it is only by resorting to

terrorism alone that they can find a most effective means of retaliation. The British government exists, because the Britishers have been successful in terrorising the whole of India. How are we to meet this official terrorism? Only counter-terrorism on the part of revolutionaries can checkmate effectively this bureaucratic bullying. A feeling of utter helplessness pervades society. How can we overcome this fatal despondency? It is only by infusing a real spirit of sacrifice that a lost self-confidence can be restored. Terrorism has its international aspect also. England's enemies, which are many, are drawn towards us by effective demonstration of our strength. That in itself is a great advantage.

India is writhing under the yoke of imperialism. Her teeming millions are today a helpless prey to poverty and ignorance. Foreign domination and economic exploitation have unmanned the vast majority of the people who constitute the workers and peasants of India. The position of the Indian proletariat is, today, extremely critical. It has a double danger to face. It has to bear the onslaught of foreign capitalism on one hand and the treacherous attack of Indian capital on the other. The latter is showing a progressive tendency to join forces with the former. The leaning of certain politicians in favour of dominion status shows clearly which way the wind blows. Indian capital is preparing to betray the masses into the hands of foreign capitalism and receive as a price of this betrayal, a little share in the government of the country. The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, now centred on socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete independence and the removal of all social distinction and privileges.

The future of India rests with the youth. They are the salt of the earth. Their promptness to suffer, their daring courage and their radiant sacrifice prove that India's future in their hands is perfectly safe. In a moment of realisation the late Deshbandhu

Dass said: "The youth are at once the hope and glory of the Motherland. Theirs is the inspiration behind the movement. Theirs is the sacrifice. Theirs is the victory. They are torch-bearers on the road to freedom. They are the pilgrims on the road to liberty."

Youth, ye soldiers of the Indian Republic, fall in: do not stand easy, do not let your knees tremble. Shake off the paralysing effects of long lethargy. Yours is a noble mission. Go out into every nook and corner of the country and prepare the ground for future revolution which is sure to come. Respond to the clarion call of duty. Do not vegetate. Grow! Every minute of your life you must think of devising means of that this your ancient land may arise with flaming eyes and fierce yawn. Sow the seeds of disgust and hatred against British imperialism in the fertile minds of your fellow youth. And the seeds shall sprout and there shall grow a jungle of sturdy trees, because you shall water the seeds with your warm blood. Then a grim and terrible earthquake having a universally destructive potentiality shall inevitably come along with portentous rumblings, and this edifice of imperialism will crash and crumble to dust, and great shall be the fall thereof. And then, and not till then, a new Indian nation shall arise and surprise humanity with the splendour and glory, all its own. The wise and the mighty shall be bewildered by the simple and the weak.

Individual liberty shall be safe. The sovereignty of the proletariat shall be recognised. We court the advent of such revolution.

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION!

Kartar Singh
President

Appendix V

The Philosophy of the Bomb

The Philosophy of the Bomb was written by Bhagwati Charan Vohra in consultation with Chandra Shekhar Azad. It was secretly sent to Bhagat Singh and other comrades in jail and was approved by them. It was written in response to Gandhi's article, *The Cult of Bomb* which criticized the revolutionaries for exploding a bomb under Lord Irwin's special train in December 1929. The revolutionaries not only defended their ideals and methods but also disapproved of Gandhian method of non-violence. This document is preserved at the National Archives of India.

Introductory

Recent events, particularly the Congress resolution on the attempt to blow up the Viceregal Special on the 23 December, 1929, and Gandhi's subsequent writings in *Young India*, clearly show that the Indian National Congress, in conjunction with Gandhi, has launched a crusade against the revolutionaries. A great amount of public criticism, both from the press and the platform, has been made against them. It is a pity that they have all along been, either deliberately or due to sheer ignorance, misrepresented and misunderstood. The revolutionaries do not shun criticism and public scrutiny of their ideals or actions. They rather welcome these as chances of making those understand, who have a genuine desire to do so, the basic principles of the revolutionary movement and the high and noble

ideals that are a perennial source of inspiration and strength to it. It is hoped that this article will help the general public to know the revolutionaries as they are and will prevent it from taking them for what interested and ignorant persons would have it believe them to be.

Violence or Non-violence

Let us, first of all, take up the question of violence and non-violence. We think that the use of these terms in itself, is a grave injustice to either party, for they express the ideals of neither of them correctly. Violence is physical force applied for committing injustice, and that is certainly not what the revolutionaries stand for. On the other hand, what generally goes by the name of non-violence is in reality the theory of soul-force, as applied to the attainment of personal and national rights through courting suffering and hoping thus to finally convert your opponent to your point of view. When a revolutionary believes certain things to be his right he asks for them, pleads for them, argues for them, wills to attain them with all the soul-force at his command, stands the greatest amount of suffering for them, is always prepared to make the highest sacrifice for their attainment, and also backs his efforts with all the physical force he is capable of. You may coin what other word you like to describe his methods but you cannot call it violence, because that would constitute an outrage on the dictionary meaning of that word. *Satyagraha* is insistence upon truth. Why press, for the acceptance of truth, by soul-force alone? Why not add physical force also to it? While the revolutionaries stand for winning independence by all forces, physical as well as moral, at their command, the advocates of soul-force would like to ban the use of physical force. The question really, therefore, is not whether you will have violence, but whether you will have soul-force plus physical force or soul-force alone.

Our Ideal

The revolutionaries believe that the deliverance of their country will come through revolution. The revolution, they are constantly working and hoping for, will not only express itself in the form of an armed conflict between the foreign government and its supporters and the people, it will also usher in a new social order. The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism and class distinctions and privileges. It will bring joy and prosperity to the starving millions who are seething today under the terrible yoke of both foreign and Indian exploitation. It will bring the nation into its own. It will give birth to a new state a new social order. Above all, it will establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and will for ever banish social parasites from the seat of political power.

Terrorism

The revolutionaries already see the advent of the revolution in the restlessness of youth, in its desire to break free from the mental bondage and religious superstition that hold them. As the youth will get more and more saturated with the psychology of revolution, it will come to have a clearer realisation of national bondage and a growing, intense, unquenchable thirst for freedom. It will grow, this feeling of bondage, this insatiable desire for freedom, till, in their righteous anger, the infuriated youth will begin to kill the oppressors. Thus has terrorism been born in the country. It is a phase, a necessary, an inevitable phase of the revolution. Terrorism is not the complete revolution and the revolution is not complete without terrorism. This thesis can be supported by an analysis of any and every revolution in history. Terrorism instils fear in the hearts of the oppressors, it brings hopes of revenge and redemption to the oppressed masses, it gives courage and self-confidence to the wavering, it shatters the spell of the superiority of the ruling class and raises the status

of the subject race in the eyes of the world, because it is the most convincing proof of a nation's hunger for freedom. Here in India, as in other countries in the past, terrorism will develop into the revolution and the revolution into independence, social, political and economic.

Revolutionary Methods

This then is what the revolutionaries believe in, that is what they hope to accomplish for their country. They are doing it both openly and secretly, and in their own way. The experience of a century long and world-wide struggle, between the masses and the governing class, is their guide to their goal, and the methods they are following have never been known to have failed.

The Congress and the Revolutionaries

Meanwhile, what has the Congress been doing? It has changed its creed from Swaraj to Complete Independence. As a logical sequence to this, one would expect it to declare a war on the British government. Instead, we find, it has declared war against the revolutionaries. The first offensive of the Congress came in the form of a resolution deploring the attempt made on the 23 December, 1929, to blow up the Viceroy's Special. It was drafted by Gandhi and he fought tooth and nail for it, with the result that is was passed by a trifling majority of 81 in a house of 1,713. Was even this bare majority a result of honest political convictions? Let us quote the opinion of Sarla Devi Chaudhrani who has been a devotee of the Congress all her life, in reply. She says: "I discovered in the course of my conversations with a good many of the Mahatma's followers that it was only their sense of personal loyalty to him that was keeping them back from an expression of the independent views and preventing them from voting against any resolution whatsoever that was

fathered by Mahatmaji." As to Gandhi's arguments in favour of the proposition, we will deal with them later, when we discuss his article "The Cult of the Bomb" which is more or less an amplification of his speech in the Congress. There is one fact about this deplorable resolution which we must not lose sight of, and that is this. In spite of the fact, that the Congress is pledged to non-violence and has been actively engaged in carrying on propaganda in its favour for the last ten years, and in spite of the fact also that the supporters of the resolution indulged in abuse, called the revolutionaries 'cowards' and described their actions as 'dastardly'—and one of them even threateningly remarked that if they wanted to be led by Gandhi, they should pass this resolution without any opposition—in spite of all this, the resolution could only be adopted by a dangerously narrow majority. That demonstrates, beyond the shadow of a doubt, how solidly the country is backing the revolutionaries. In a way Gandhi deserved our thanks for having brought the question up for discussion and thus having shown to the old at large that even the Congress—that stronghold of non-violence—is at least as much, if not more, with the revolutionaries as with him.

Gandhi on War Path

Having achieved a victory which cost him more than a defeat, Gandhi has returned to the attack in his article "The Cult of the Bomb". We will give it our closest attention before proceeding further. That article consists of three things—his faith, his opinion and his arguments. We will not discuss what is a matter of faith with him because reason has little in common with faith. Let us then take such of his opinions as are backed by arguments and his arguments proper, against what he calls violence and discuss them one by one.

Do the Masses Believe in Non-violence

He thinks that on the basis of his experience during his latest tour in the country, he is right in believing that the large masses of Indian humanity are yet untouched by the spirit of violence and that non-violence has come to stay as a political weapon. Let him not delude himself on the experiences of his latest tour in the country. Though it is true that the average leader confines his tours to places where only the mail train can conveniently land him while Gandhi has extended his tour limit to where a motorcar can take him, the practice of staying only with the richest people in the places visited, of spending most of his time on being complimented by his devotees in private and public, and of granting *Darshan* now and then to the illiterate masses whom he claims to understand so well, disqualifies him from claiming to know the mind of the masses. No man can claim to know a people's mind by seeing them from the public platform and giving them *Darshan* and *Updesh*. He can at the most claim to have told the masses what he thinks about things. Has Gandhi, during recent years, mixed in the social life of the masses? Has he sat with the peasant round the evening fire and tried to know what he thinks? Has he passed a single evening in the company of a factory labourer and shared with him his vows? We have, and therefore we claim to know what the masses think. We assure Gandhi that the average Indian, like the average human being, understands little of the fine theological niceties about *Ahimsa* and *loving one's enemy*. The way of the world is like this. You have a friend: you love him, sometimes so much that you even die for him. You have an enemy: you shun him, you fight against him and, if possible, kill him. The gospel of the revolutionaries is simple and straight. It is what has been since the days of Adam and Eve, and no man has any difficulty about understanding it. We affirm that the masses of India are solidly with us because we know it from personal experience. The day

is not far off when they will flock in their thousands to work the will of the Revolution.

The Gospel of Love

Gandhi declares that his faith in the efficacy of non-violence has increased. That is to say, he believes more and more, that through his gospel of love and self-imposed suffering, he hopes someday to convert the foreign rulers to his way of thinking. Now, he has devoted his whole life to the preaching of his wonderful gospel and has practised it with unwavering constance, as few others have done. Will he let the world know how many enemies of India he has been able to turn into friends? How many O'Dwyers, Readings and Irwins has he been able to convert into friends of India? If none, how can India be expected to share his 'growing faith' that he will be able to persuade or compel England to agree to Indian Independence through the practice of non-violence?

What would have Happened?

If the bomb, that burst under the Viceroy's Special, had exploded properly, one of the two things suggested by Gandhi would have surely happened. The Viceroy would have either been badly injured or killed. Under such circumstances there certainly would have been no meeting between the leaders of political parties and the Viceroy. The uncalled for and undignified attempt on the part of these individuals, to lower the national prestige by knocking at the gates of the government house with the beggar's bowl in their hands and dominion status on their lips, in spite of the clear terms of the Calcutta Ultimatum, would have been checkmated and the nation would have been the better off for that. If, fortunately, the explosion had been powerful enough to kill the Viceroy, one more enemy of India would have met a well deserved doom. The author of the Meerut prosecutions

and the Lahore and Bhusawal persecutions can appear a friend of India only to the enemies of her freedom. In spite of Gandhi and the Nehru and their claims to political sagacity and statesmanship, Irwin has succeeded in shattering the unity between different political parties in the country that had resulted from the boycott of the Simon Commission. Even the Congress today is a house divided against itself. Who else, except the Viceroy and his olive tongue, have we to thank for our grave misfortunes? And yet, there exist people in our country who proclaim him a Friend of India!

The Future of the Congress

There might be those who have no regard for the Congress and hope nothing from it. If Gandhi thinks that the revolutionaries belong to the category, he wrongs them grievously. They fully realise the part played by Congress in awakening among the ignorant masses a keen desire for freedom. They expect great things of it in the future. Though they hold firmly to their opinion, that so long as person like Sen Gupta whose wonderful intelligence compels him to discern the hand of the CID in the late attempt to blow up the Viceroy's Special, and persons like Ansari, who think abuse the better part of argument and know so little of politics as to make the ridiculous and fallacious assertion that no nation had achieved freedom by the bomb, have a determining voice in the affairs of the Congress, the country can hope little from it; they are hopefully looking forward to the day, when the mania of non-violence would have passed away from the Congress, and it would march arm in arm with the revolutionaries to their common goal of Complete Independence. This year it has accepted the ideal which the revolutionaries have preached and lived up to more than a quarter of a century. Let us hope the next year will see it endorse their methods also.

Violence and Military Expenditure

Gandhi is of opinion that as often as violence has been practised in the country, it has resulted in an increase of military expenditure. If his reference is to revolutionary activities during the last twenty-five years we dispute the accuracy of his statement and challenge him to prove his statement with facts and figures. If, on the other hand, he had the wars that have taken place in India since the British came here in mind, our reply is that even his modest experiment in *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha* which had little to compare in it with the wars for independence produced its effect on the finances of the bureaucracy. Mass action, whether violent or non-violent, whether successful or unsuccessful, is bound to produce the same kind of repercussion on the finances of a state.

The Reforms

Why should Gandhi mix up the revolutionaries with the various constitutional reforms granted by the government? They never cared or worked for the Morley-Minto Reforms, Montague Reforms and the like. These the British government threw before the constitutionalist agitators to lure them away from the right path. This was the bribe paid to them for their support to the government in its policy of crushing and uprooting the revolutionaries. These toys—as Gandhi calls them—were sent to India for the benefit of those, who, from time to time, raised the cry of 'Home Rule', 'Self-Government', 'Responsible', 'Full Responsible Government', 'Dominion Status' and such other constitutional names for slavery. The revolutionaries never claim the Reforms as their achievements. They raised the standard of independence long ago. They have lived for it. They have ungrudgingly laid their lives down for the sake of this ideal. They claim that their sacrifices have produced a tremendous change in the mentality of the people. That their efforts have

advanced the country a long way on the road to independence is granted by even those who do not see eye to eye with them in politics.

The Way of Progress

As to Gandhi's contention that violence impedes the march of progress and thus directly postpones the day of freedom, we can refer him to so many contemporary instances where violence has led to the social progress and political freedom of the people who practised it. Take the case of Russia and Turkey for example. In both countries the party of progress took over the state organisation through an armed revolution. Yet social progress and political freedom have not been impeded. Legislation, backed by force, has made the masses go 'double march' on the road of progress. The solitary example of Afghanistan cannot establish a political formula. It is rather the exception that proves the rule.

Failure of Non-cooperation

Gandhi is of opinion that the great awakening in the people, during the days of non-cooperation, was a result of the preaching of non-violence. It is wrong to assign to non-violence the widespread awakening of the masses which, in fact, is manifested wherever a programme of direct action is adopted. In Russia, for instance, there came about widespread awakening in the peasants and workers when the communists launched forth their great programme of Militant Mass Action, though nobody preached non-violence to them. We will even go further and state that it was mainly the mania for non-violence and Gandhi's compromise mentality that brought about the disruption of the forces that had come together at the call of Mass Action. It is claimed that non-violence can be used as a weapon for righting political wrongs. To say the least, it is a novel idea, yet untried.

It failed to achieve what were considered to be the just rights of Indians in South Africa. It failed to bring 'Swaraj within a year' to the Indian masses in spite of the untiring labours of an army of national workers and one and a quarter crores of rupees. More recently, it failed to win for the Bardoli peasants what the leaders of the Satyagraha movement had promised them—the famous irreducible minimum of Gandhi and Patel. We know of no other trials non-violence has had on a country-wide scale. Up to this time non-violence has been blessed with one result—Failure. Little wonder, then, that the country refuses to give it another trial. In fact Satyagraha as preached by Gandhi is a form of agitation—a protest, leading up invariably, as has already been seen, to a compromise. It can hardly be of any use to a nation striving for national independence which can never come as the result of a compromise. The sooner we recognise that there can be no compromise between independence and slavery, the better.

Is it a New Era

'We are entering upon a new era', thinks Gandhi. The mere act of defining Swaraj as Complete Independence, this technical change in the Congress constitution, can hardly constitute a new era. It will be a great day indeed when the Congress will decide upon a country-wide programme of Mass Action, based on well recognised revolutionary principles. Till then the unfurling of the flag of Independence is a mockery and we concur with the following remarks of Sarla Devi Chaudhrani which she recently made in a press interview.

"The unfurling of the Flag of Independence", she says, "at just one minute after midnight of the 31 December, 1929, was too stagy for words—just as the GOC and the assistant GOC and others in gaudy uniforms were card board Grand Officers Commanding.

"The fact that the unfurling of the flag of Independence lay hanging in the balance till midnight of that date, and that the scales might have been turned at even the eleventh hour fifty-ninth minute had a message from the Viceroy or the Secretary of State come to the Congress granting Dominion Status, proves that Independence is not a heart hunger of the leaders but that the declaration of it is only like a petulant child's retort. It would have been a worthy action of the Indian National Congress if Independence was achieved first and declared afterwards."

It is true that the Congress orators will henceforth harangue the masses on Complete Independence instead of Dominion Status. They will call upon the people to prepare for a struggle in which one party is to deliver blows and the other is simply to receive them, till beaten and demoralised beyond hope of recovery. Can such a thing be named a struggle and can it ever lead the country to Complete Independence? It is all very well to hold fast to the highest ideal worthy of a nation, but it is nonetheless necessary to adopt the best, the most efficacious and tried means to achieve it, ere you became the laughing stock of the whole world.

No Bullying Please

Gandhi has called upon all those who are not past reason to withdraw their support from the revolutionaries and condemn their actions so that "our deluded patriots may, for want of nourishment to their violent spirit, realise the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activities have every time done". How easy and convenient it is to call people deluded, to declare them to be past reason, to call upon the public to withdraw its support and condemn them so that they may get isolated and be forced to suspend their activities, specially when a man holds the confidence of an influential section of the public! It is a pity

that Gandhi does not and will not understand revolutionary psychology in spite of the life-long experience of public life. Life is a precious thing. It is dear to everyone. If a man becomes a revolutionary, if he goes about with his life in the hollow of his hand ready to sacrifice it at any moment, he does not do so merely for the fun of it. He does not risk his life merely because sometimes, when the crowd is in a sympathetic mood, it cries 'Bravo' in appreciation. He does it because his reason forces him to take that course, because his conscience dictates it. A revolutionary believes in reason more than anything. It is to reason, and reason alone, that he bows. No amount of abuse and condemnation, even if it emanates from the highest of the high can turn him from his set purpose. To think that a revolutionary will give up his ideas if public support and appreciation is withdrawn from him, is the highest folly. Many a revolutionary has, ere now, stepped on the scaffold and laid his life down for the cause, regardless of the curses that the constitutionalist agitators rained plentifully upon him. If you will have the revolutionaries suspend their activities, reason with them squarely. That is the one and the only way. For the rest let there be no doubt in anybody's mind. A revolutionary is the last person on earth to submit to bullying.

An Appeal

We take this opportunity to appeal to our countrymen—to the youth, to the workers and peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia—to come forward and join us in carrying aloft the banner of freedom. Let us establish a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility. In the name of those gallant men and women who willingly accepted death so that we, their descendants, may lead a happier life, who toiled ceaselessly and perished for the poor, the famished, and exploited millions of India, we call upon

every patriot to take up the fight in all seriousness. Let nobody toy with nation's freedom which is her very life, by making psychological experiments in non-violence and such other novelties. Our slavery is our shame. When shall we have courage and wisdom enough to be able to shake ourselves free of it? What is our great heritage of civilisation and culture worth if we have not enough self-respect left in us to prevent us from bowing surveillance to the commands of foreigners and paying homage to their flag and king?

Victory or Death

There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has 'bled us white'. As a race and a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. Do people still expect us to forget and to forgive? We shall have our revenge—a people's righteous revenge on the tyrant. Let cowards fall back and cringe for compromise and peace. We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end—to Victory or Death.

LONG LIVE THE REVOLUTION

Kartar Singh
President
Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

Star Printo Bind, Delhi-20



Bhagat Singh was not only a great patriot and revolutionary socialist, but also one of India's early Marxist thinkers and ideologues. A voracious reader right from his boyhood, he brought upon his thinking and writings the tremendous influence of his varied reading. His several statements before courts, his passionate letters to his father and other comrades, his insights on revolution and communalism and his atheistic faith, all reveal a mind that is at once original and mature in understanding. The National Book Trust, India is proud to present this selection of Bhagat Singh's speeches, writings and letters for a wider dissemination, on the special occasion of his 100 birth anniversary as also to mark the 75 year of his martyrdom.

D N Gupta teaches history at the Hindu College. His book, *Communism and Nationalism in India (1939-1945): A Study of the Communist Party of India's Relations with India's Liberation Movement*, will soon be published.



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